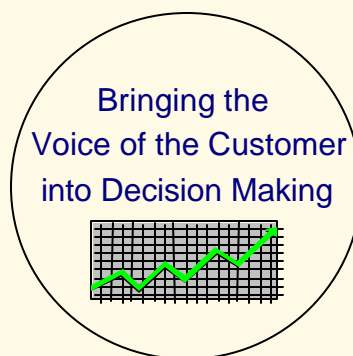


SURVEY OF VETERANS' SATISFACTION WITH THE VA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

TRAINING AND EDUCATION (REHABILITATION SERVICES) PHASE

2000 Results

National Summary



Surveys and Research Staff
Data Management Office
Veterans Benefits Administration

February 2001

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Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

- To measure veterans' satisfaction with the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) program at both the national and VBA Service Delivery Network (SDN) level.
- To identify areas of the VR&E program which are most satisfying to veterans, areas of the VR&E program which are least satisfying to veterans, and areas of the VR&E program which are in greatest need of improvement.
- To determine where improvements to the VR&E program will have the greatest impact on veterans' satisfaction.
- To determine program variations that affect veterans' satisfaction.
- To create performance measures, including measures of customer service, through a strategic planning process, as required by the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) passed and signed into law in August of 1993.
- To establish an explicit goal for the quality of service that is "equal to the best in business" as described in Executive Order 12862, Setting Customer Service Standards, issued in September 1993. This order was aimed at "ensuring that the Federal Government provides the highest quality of service possible to the American people."

Survey Objectives (continued)

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- To provide data for the purpose of monitoring VBA's performance against its customer service standards and driving Service Delivery Network (SDN) and regional office improvements in customer service.
- To provide much-needed customer measures for evaluating VR&E's ongoing business process reengineering (BPR), case management, and related initiatives. Information from this survey will also be used to populate VR&E's balanced scorecard.

- As part of this project, VBA's Surveys and Research Staff held a series of focus groups with veterans and front-line employees to gather information relevant to customer satisfaction issues.
- From the focus group data, three surveys were developed to assess customer satisfaction at three phases of the program: evaluation and planning, training and education (rehabilitation services), and employment services.
- The original VR&E surveys, designed by the VBA, were pretested from June to August 1999. Pretest reports for the three phases of the program were developed to summarize the pretest findings, to examine the skip patterns, and to analyze the verbatim responses.
- Using the information provided in the pretest reports, the VBA Surveys and Research Staff and Caliber Associates modified the three questionnaires, which were used during the first full administration in 1999. Results from the 1999 administration were provided in a national report and reports for each SDN in March 2000.
- This report presents data on the second full administration of the VR&E surveys. Prior to gathering data for this administration, the surveys were slightly modified by VBA Surveys and Research Staff and Caliber Associates. In the 2000 Training and Education questionnaire, Vocational Rehabilitation and Counseling was changed to Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment throughout the survey. The final Training and Education questionnaire and mailing materials appear in Appendix A.
- Data for this report were collected during October 2000, November 2000, and December 2000 by Caliber Associates. The Office of Management and Budget approval was obtained for each survey by the Veterans Benefits Administration. The date on the reports is November 2000, which reflects the midpoint of the data collection period.

- A random sample of approximately 6,410 veterans, distributed across nine VBA Service Delivery Networks (SDN), were sent the Training and Education questionnaire. A Spanish language version of the survey was provided to veterans residing in Puerto Rico.
- The sample of respondents who received the Training and Education questionnaire were in the rehabilitation phase phase of their program for a minimum of four months, or had just completed the rehabilitation phase in the previous four months. This included those who interrupted or discontinued the program at any time between the period when the sample was drawn and data collection was complete. A total of 36,392 persons were in the phase when the sample was drawn.
- Veterans who were selected into both the 1999 sample and the 2000 sample, and were listed in the same phase for both years, were removed from the 2000 sample. However, veterans who were selected into both the 1999 sample and the 2000 sample, but had moved to another phase from 1999 to 2000 were included in the sample, since they would receive a different questionnaire in the 2000 administration.
- A total of 6410 questionnaires were sent to the nine Service Delivery Networks (SDNs). The sample was not designed to yield data for any one regional office, only for the nine SDNs, which comprise the national total.
- A total of 3774 respondents completed the **Training and Education** questionnaire for a response rate of 59.6 percent.
- A more detailed discussion of the survey methodology appears in Appendix B.

■ **Demographics:**

- Most respondents were male (79.8 percent), averaging 40.5 years of age.

■ **Background Information About the VR&E Program:**

- Respondents indicated the most common length of time since their vocational rehabilitation plan of service was developed was less than six months, in which 26.6 percent indicated that length.
- 58.2 percent of respondents indicated a VA staff counselor and 35.7 percent of respondents indicated a counselor under contract with the VA was their counselor during the rehabilitation phase.
- 86.7 percent of respondents said they were very or somewhat satisfied with the rehabilitation goal selected by themselves and the counselor.

■ **Knowledge and Use of Vocational Rehabilitation Services:**

- Common types of counseling or referrals were assistance in enrolling in an educational/training program (71.7 percent) and general support and encouragement (44.6 percent).
- The most frequently reported benefits that respondents would have liked to receive but did not were computer equipment/software (53.7 percent) and dental services (25.0 percent).
- Respondents found too much red tape to obtain supplies/services (48.3 percent) and lack of knowledge about what benefits are available (45.0 percent) to be most difficult about obtaining benefits.

■ Relationship with the Counselor

- 73.4 percent of respondents said they had a clear understanding of the respective responsibilities and obligations of themselves and their counselor.
- 72.1 percent of respondents indicated strongly agreed or agreed that their counselor gives good information and advice.
- 68.3 percent of respondents indicated strongly agreed or agreed that their counselor shows a genuine interest in their progress.

■ Contact with the Counselor

- 82.5 percent of respondents indicated the number and length of their in-person meetings with their counselor are adequate.
- 83.7 percent of respondents said the location and 83.6 percent said the scheduled time of in-person meetings were very or somewhat convenient.
- 75.5 percent of respondents indicated their counselor fully addresses their questions, concerns, or complaints.

■ Access to the VR&E Program

- 71.8 percent of respondents indicated it was very or somewhat easy to obtain information from the program.

■ Current Status in the Program

- 88.5 percent of respondents were currently pursuing the program. Voluntarily, 1.9 percent withdrew from the program and 7.8 percent interrupted their program. At the request of the VA, 0.7 percent withdrew from the program and 1.1 percent interrupted their program.

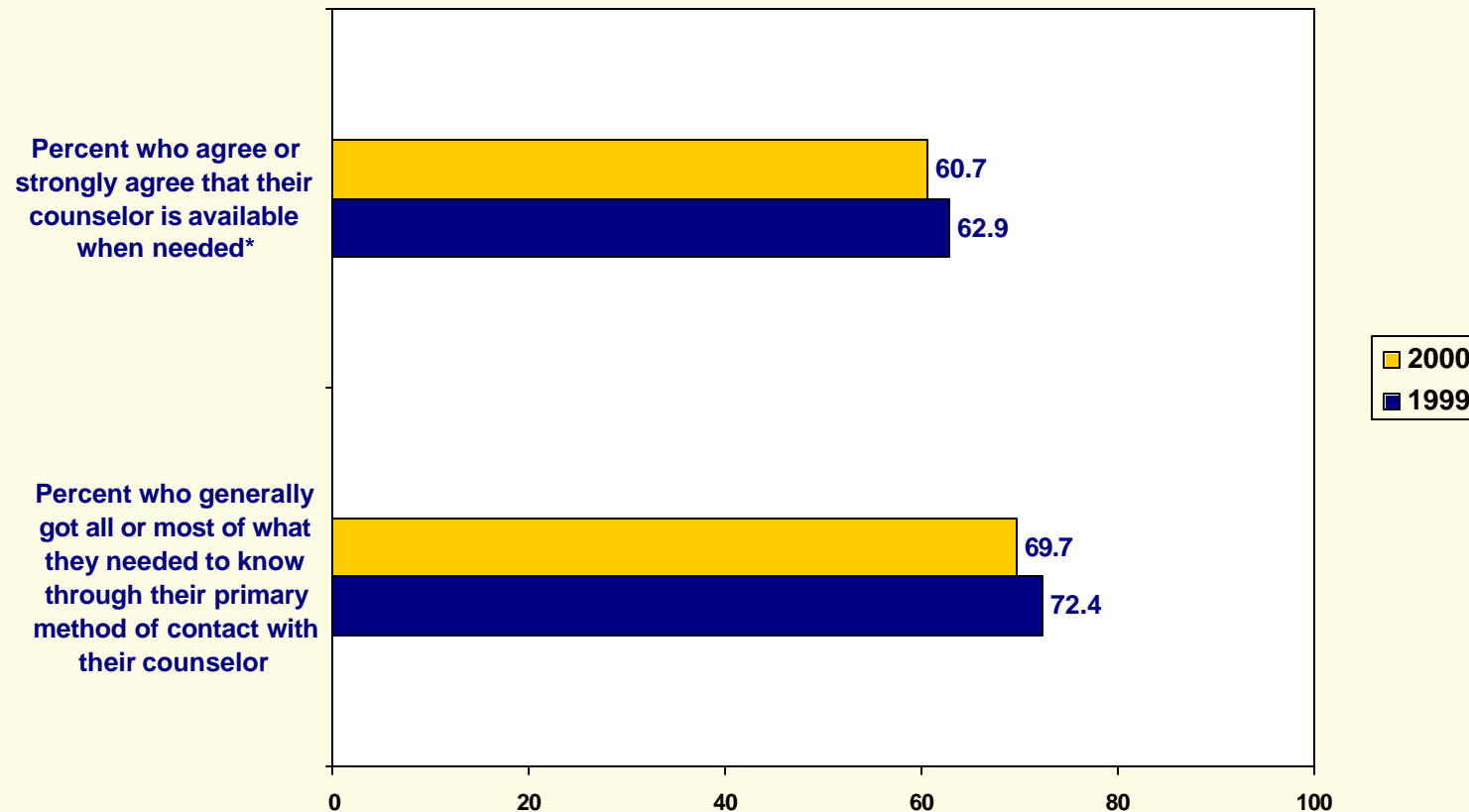
■ Overall Program Impressions

- 69.5 percent of respondents indicated the VA Vocational Rehabilitation Program has treated them as an individual, not just a case to be managed.
- Overall, 80.2 percent of respondents indicated the Rehabilitation process reflected the courtesy, compassion, and respect they would expect as a veteran of the United States.
- 60.4 percent of respondents indicated their educational goals were raised and 74.3 percent indicated that their educational goals were more realistic as a result of the program.
- 61.6 percent of respondents indicated their career goals were raised and 72.4 percent indicated that their career goals were more realistic as a result of the program.
- Overall, 85.3 percent of respondents said they were very or somewhat satisfied with the training or education phase of their program.
- 96.9 percent of respondents would recommend this program to other disabled veterans.

Significant Results in Trend Analysis: 2000 vs. 1999

12

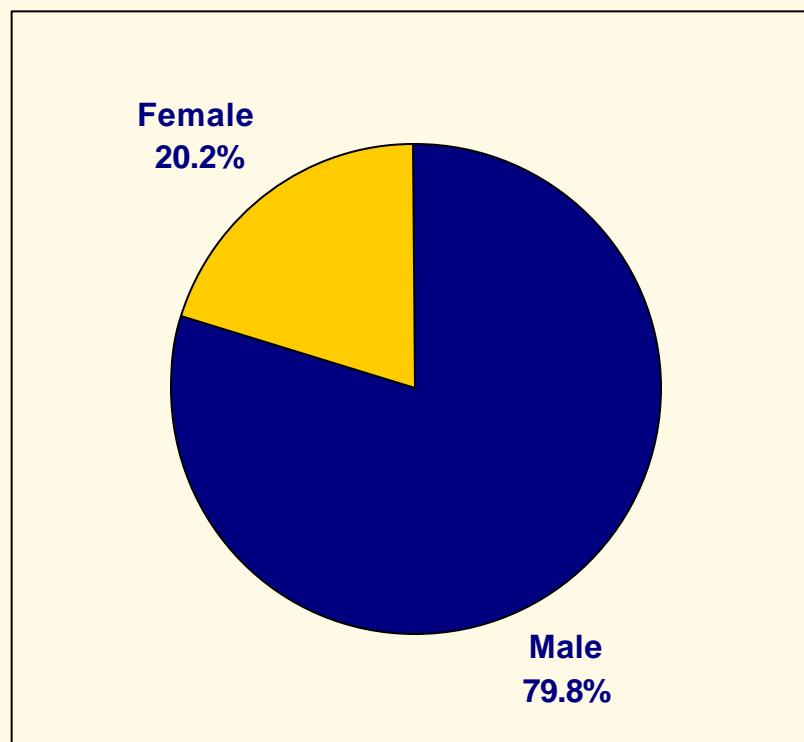
The items shown here reflect true differences in performance over time. If an item does not appear, then performance did not significantly change between the years.



NOTE: * Excludes responses of "Not applicable"

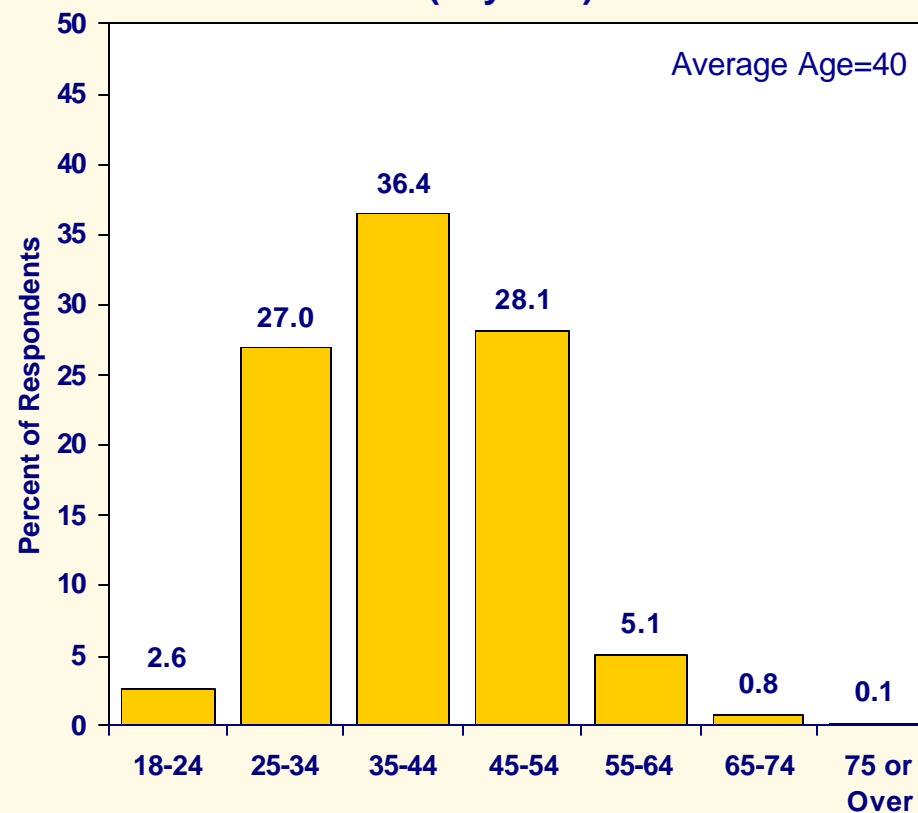
Respondent Characteristics

Gender Distribution



Valid n=3774

Respondent Age (in years)



Valid n=3774

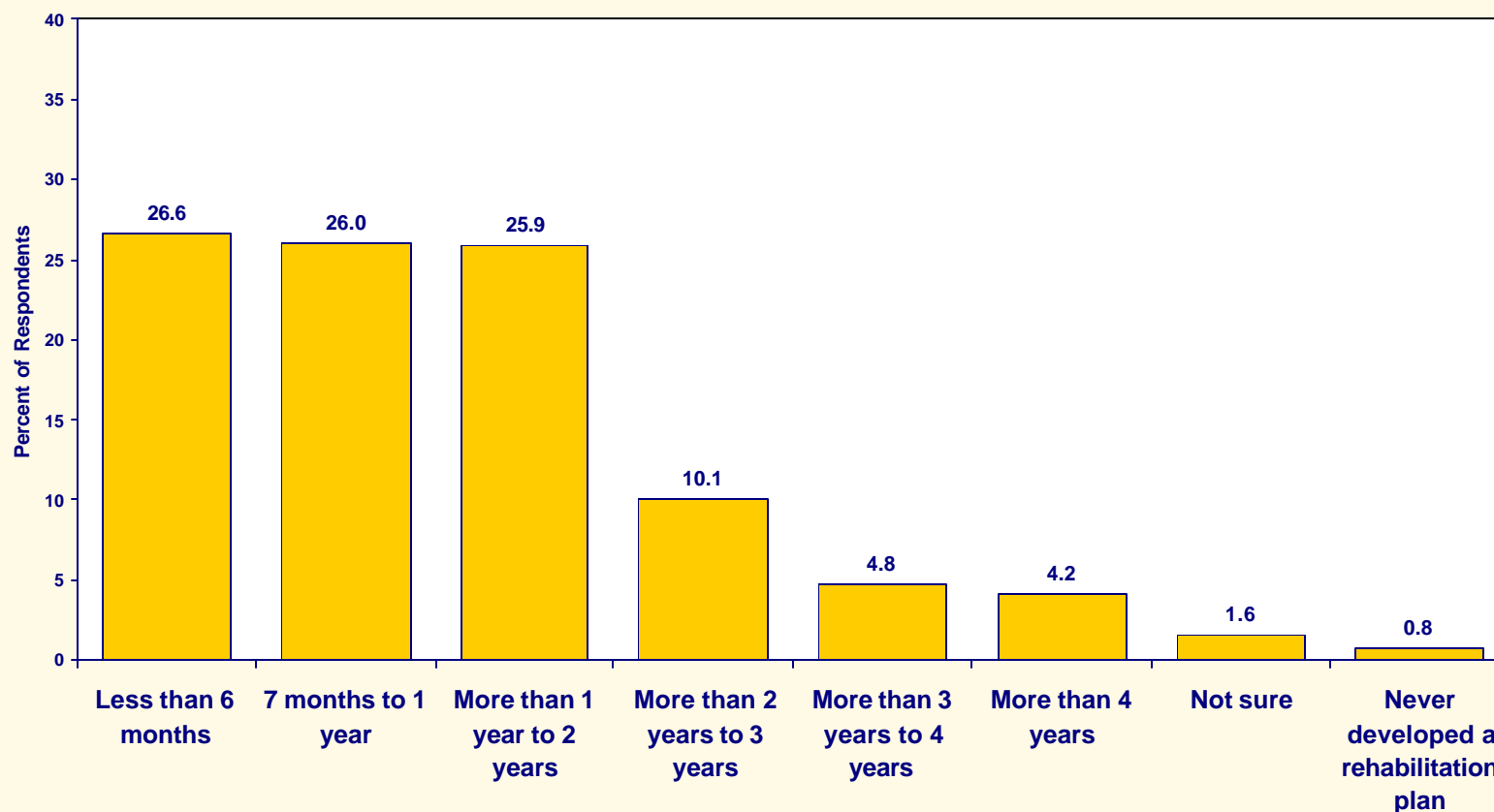
Survey Findings:
Background Information About Respondents'
VR&E Program

Background Information About Respondents' VR&E Program

16

Question 1:

How long has it been since you developed a vocational plan of services with your counselor?

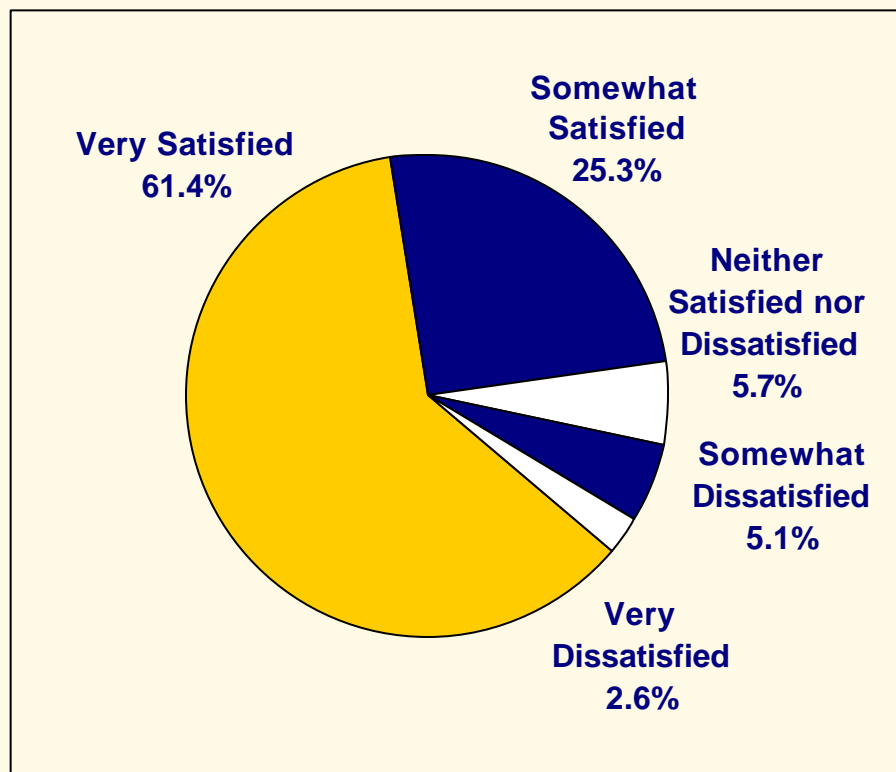


Valid n=3611

Background Information About Respondents' VR&E Program

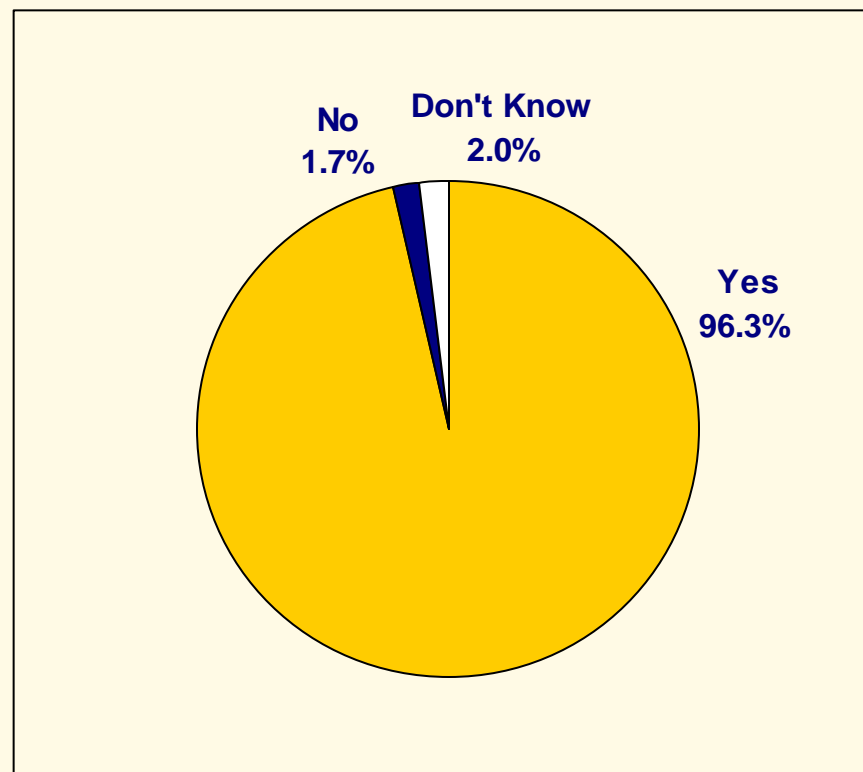
17

Question 2:
How satisfied are you with the rehabilitation goal you and your counselor selected?



Valid n=3548

Question 3:
Do (Did) you have a vocational rehabilitation specialist or counselor assigned to you during the training or educational phase of your program?

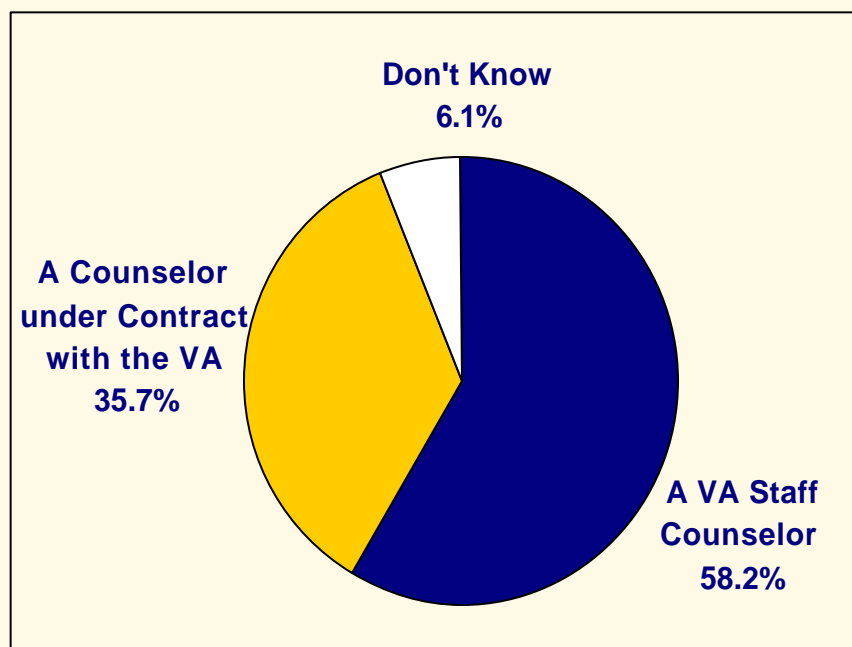


Valid n=3612

Background Information About Respondents' VR&E Program

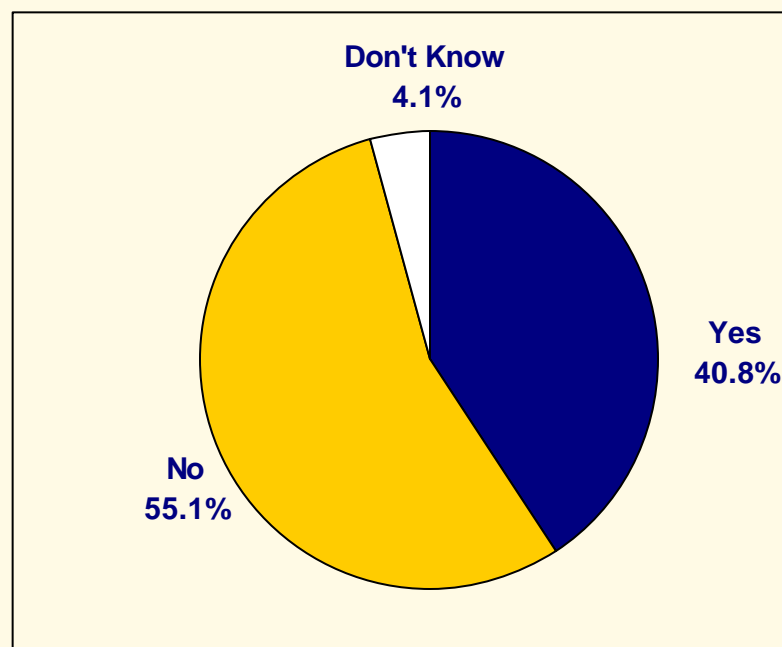
18

Question 4:
Who is (was) your primary specialist or counselor assigned during this rehabilitation phase?



Valid n=3437

Question 5:
Is this the same counselor who prepared your plan of services?

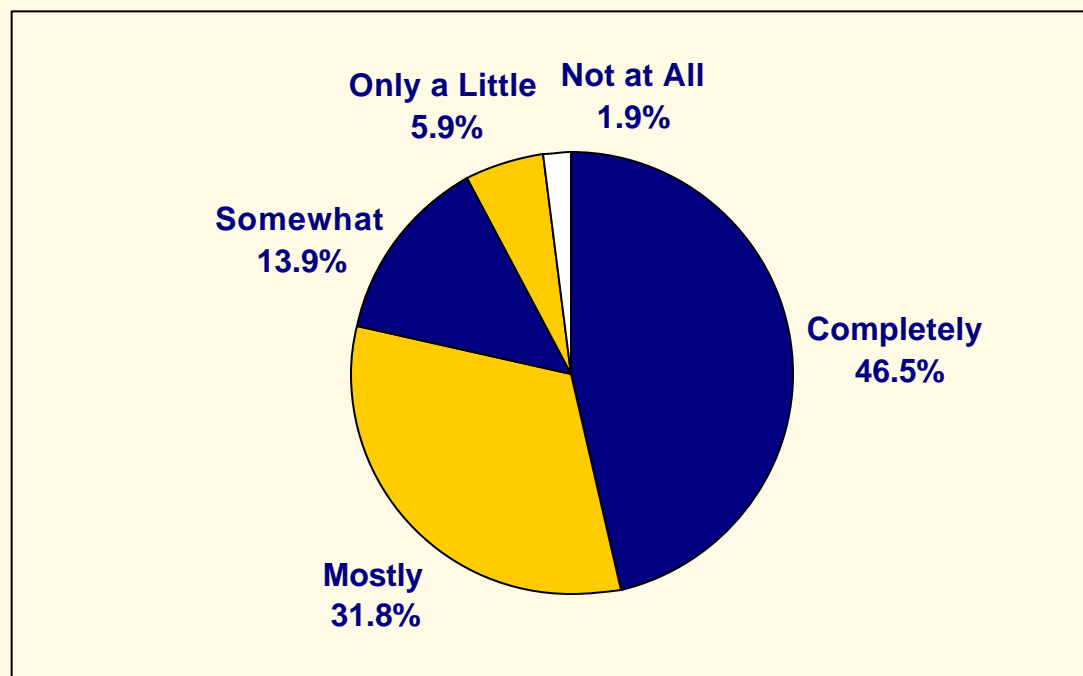


Valid n=3474

Survey Findings:
Knowledge and Use of Vocational
Rehabilitation Services

Question 6:

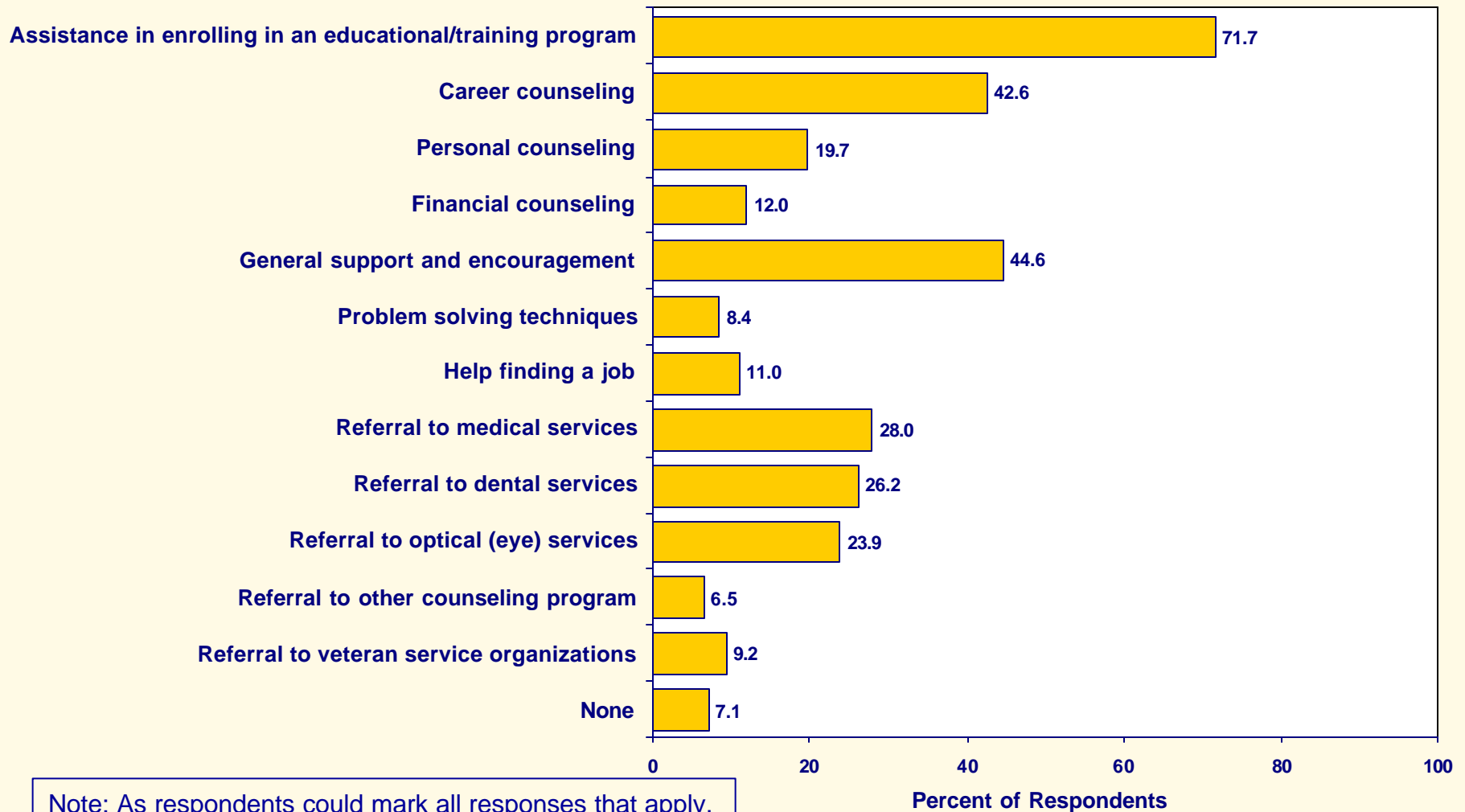
How completely did your counselor explain all the benefits and services available to you during your rehabilitation program?



Valid n=3474

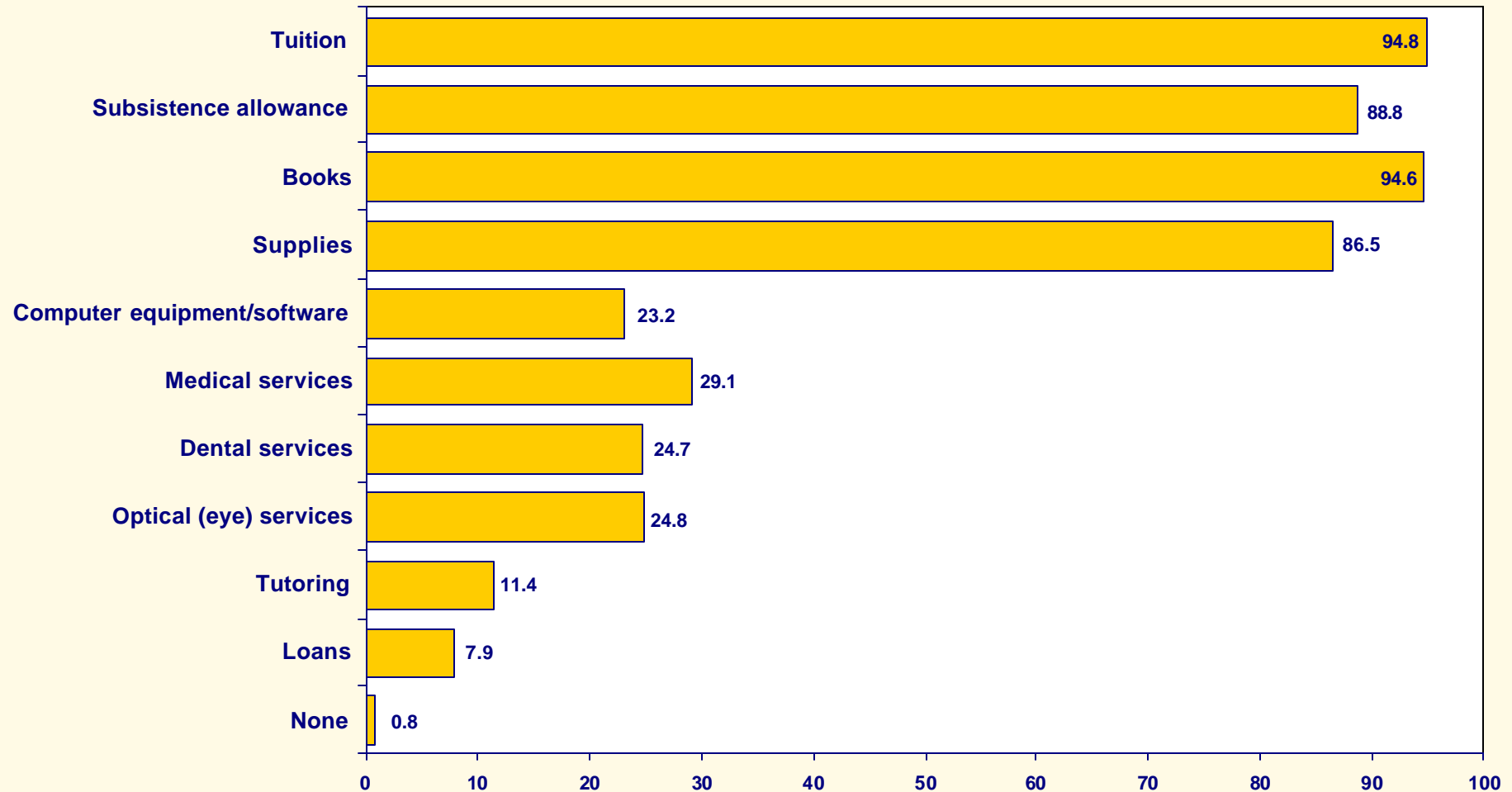
Question 7:

Which of the following types of counseling or referrals has your counselor provided?



Question 8:

Which of the following benefits have you received during your rehabilitation program?



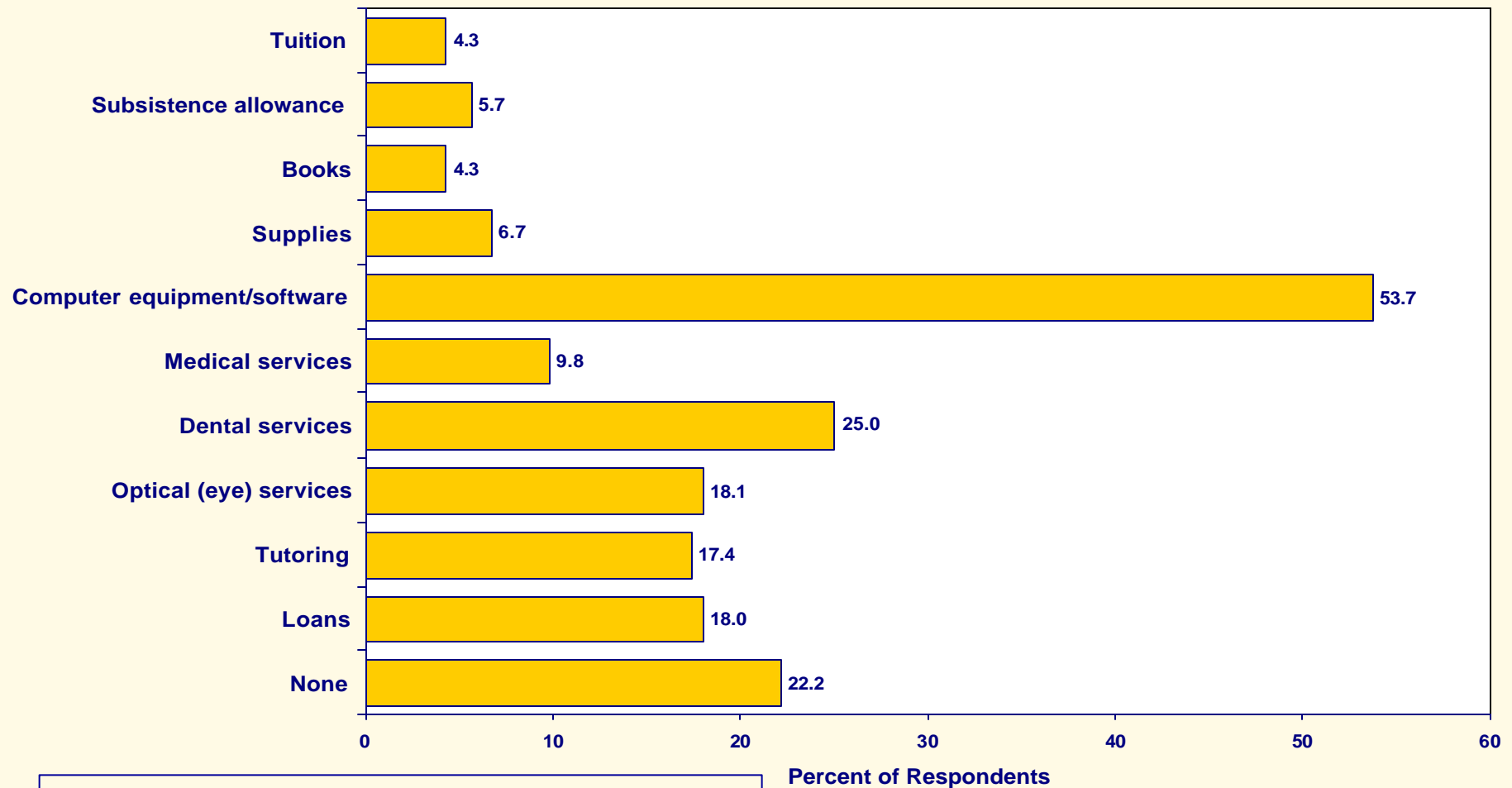
Note: As respondents could mark all responses that apply, the percentages do not add to 100%.

Percent of Respondents

Valid n=3614

Question 9:

Which of the following benefits would you have liked to receive during your rehabilitation program, but did not?

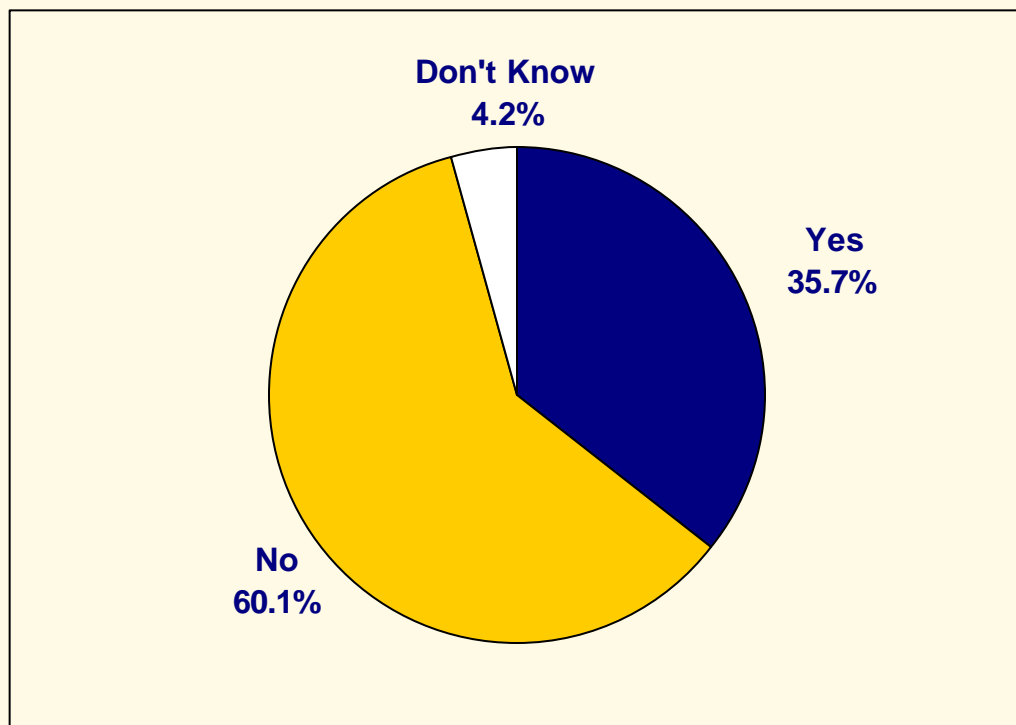


Note: As respondents could mark all responses that apply, the percentages do not add to 100%.

Valid n=3361

Question 10:

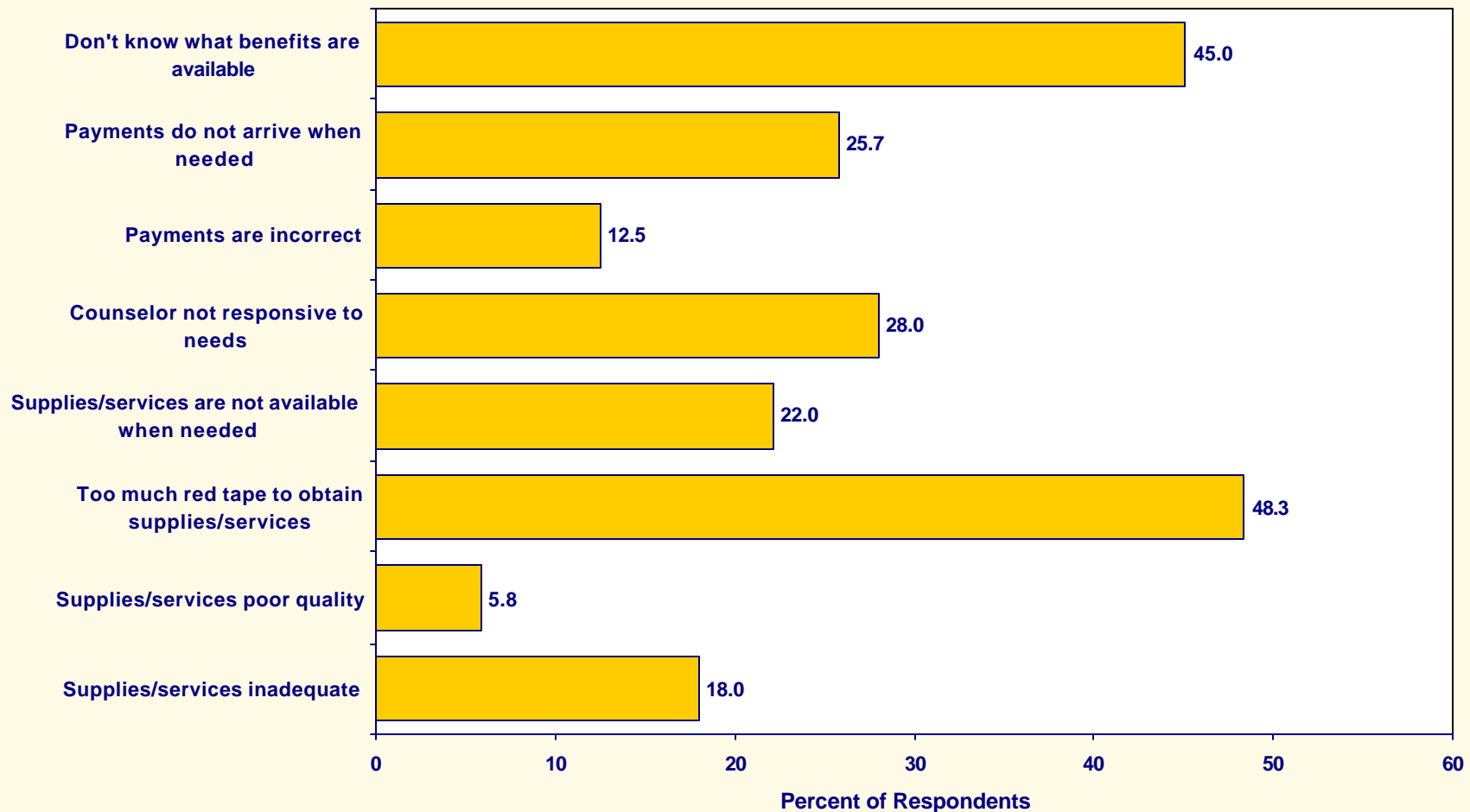
Have you found anything to be difficult about obtaining any of the benefits?



Valid n=3583

Question 11:

What specifically do you find to be difficult about obtaining any of these benefits?

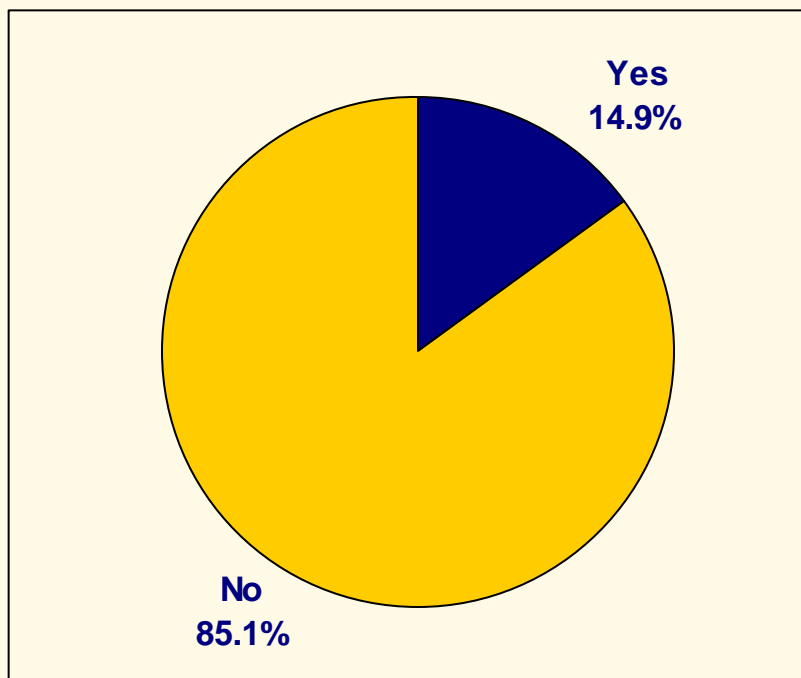


Note: As respondents could mark all responses that apply, the percentages do not add to 100%.

Valid n=1260

Question 12:

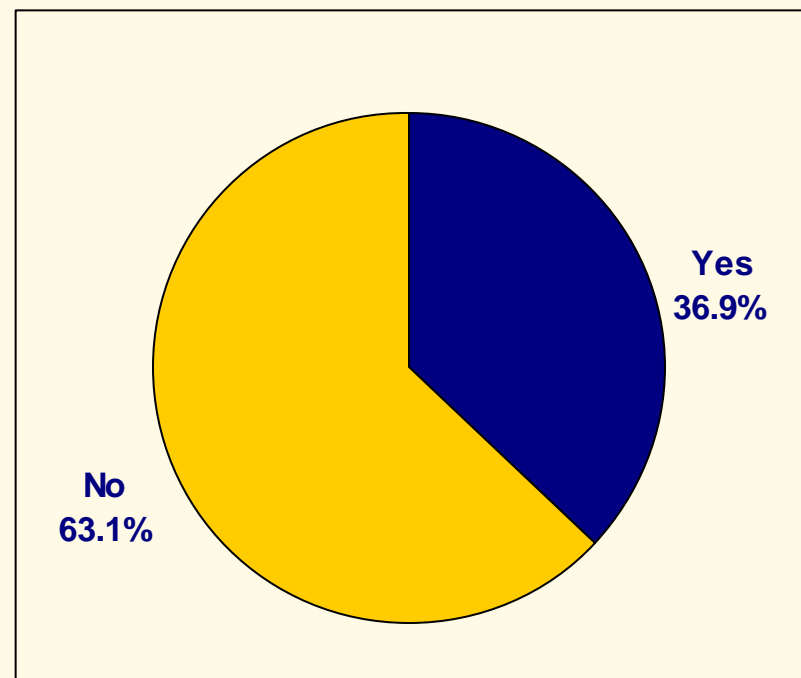
Have you ever had to borrow or pay out-of-pocket expenses in order to ENROLL or stay enrolled in training or education BECAUSE VA DID NOT PROVIDE PAYMENTS ON TIME?



Valid n=3571

Question 13:

Have you ever had to borrow or pay out-of-pocket expenses in order to obtain needed SUPPLIES or benefits BECAUSE VA DID NOT PROVIDE THEM WHEN NEEDED?



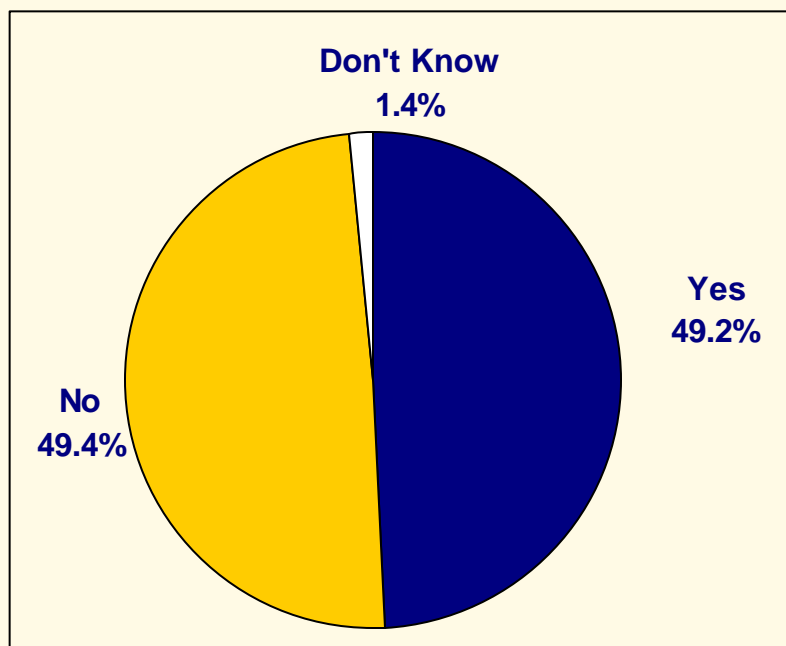
Valid n=3567

Survey Findings: Relationship With Counselor

Relationship With Counselor

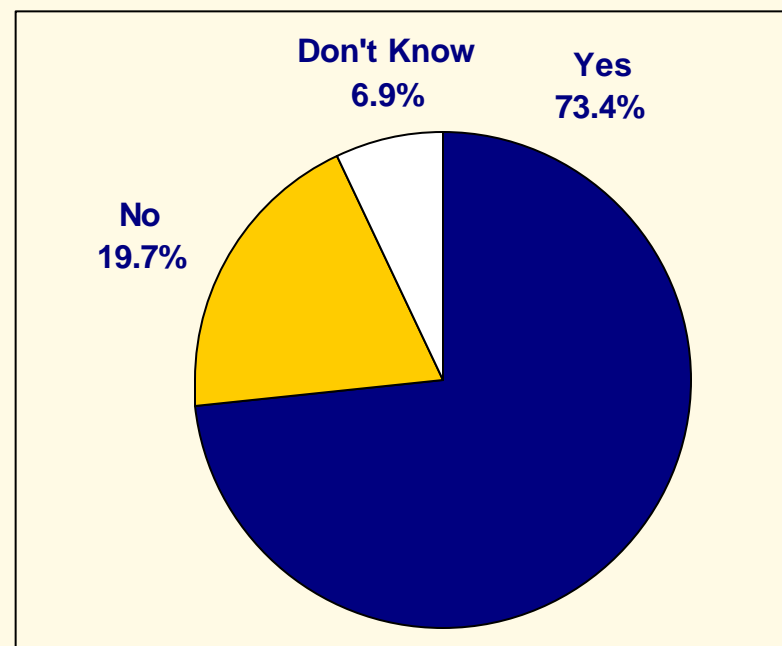
28

Question 14:
Have you had the same counselor since you developed your vocational rehabilitation plan for services?



Valid n=3613

Question 15:
Do you have a clear understanding of the respective responsibilities and obligations of yourself and your counselor?



Valid n=3605

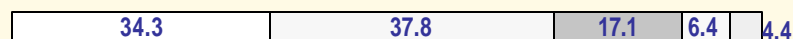
Relationship With Counselor

29

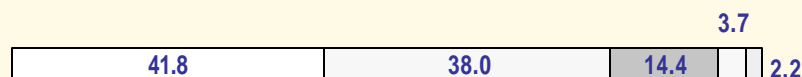
Questions 16-26:

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neither ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

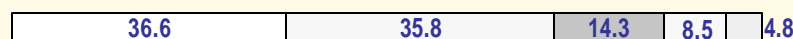
Q16: Your counselor gives you good information and advice.



Q17: Your counselor is knowledgeable regarding VA's vocational rehabilitation program.



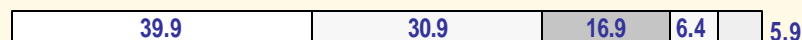
Q18: Your counselor has provided assistance according to your individual needs.



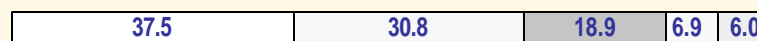
Q19: When your counselor makes a decision regarding your program, the reason for the decision is clearly explained.



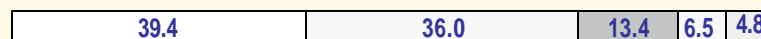
Q20: Your counselor shows a caring and compassionate attitude toward you.



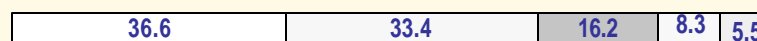
Q21: Your counselor shows genuine interest in your progress.



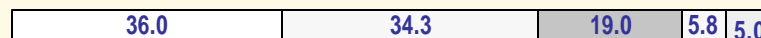
Q22: Your counselor has a communication style that is easy to understand.



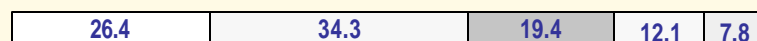
Q23: Your counselor is responsive to your needs.



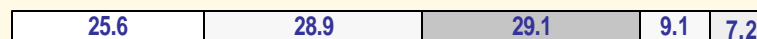
Q24: Your counselor listens to your feelings and concerns.



Q25: Your counselor is available when needed.



Q26: Your counselor helps you focus on your employment goal.

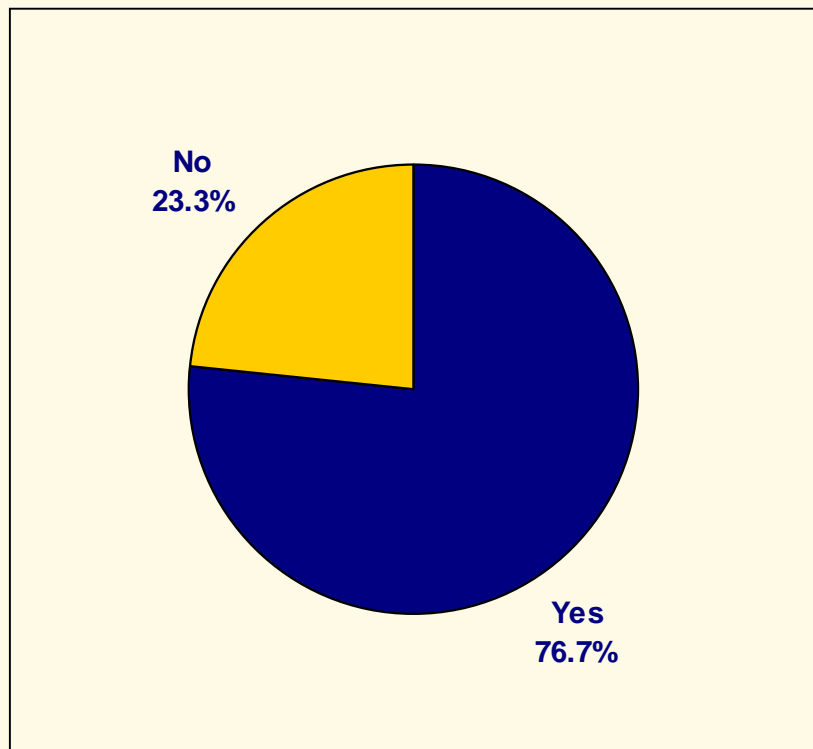


Percent of Respondents

Note:
Responses
of "Not
Applicable"
are not
included in
the analysis.

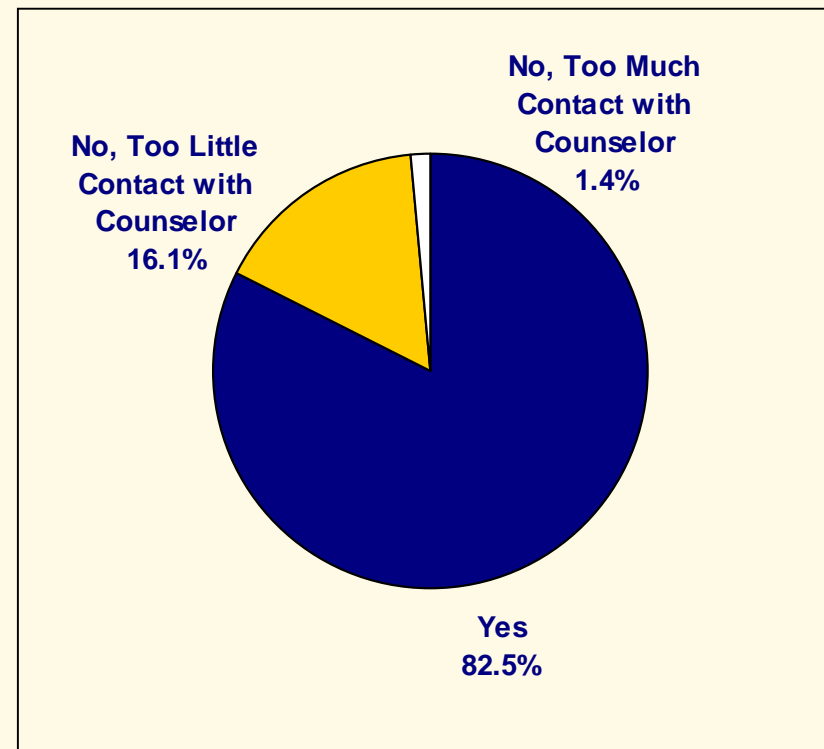
Survey Findings: Contact With Counselor

Question 27:
Do you have scheduled in-person meetings with your counselor?



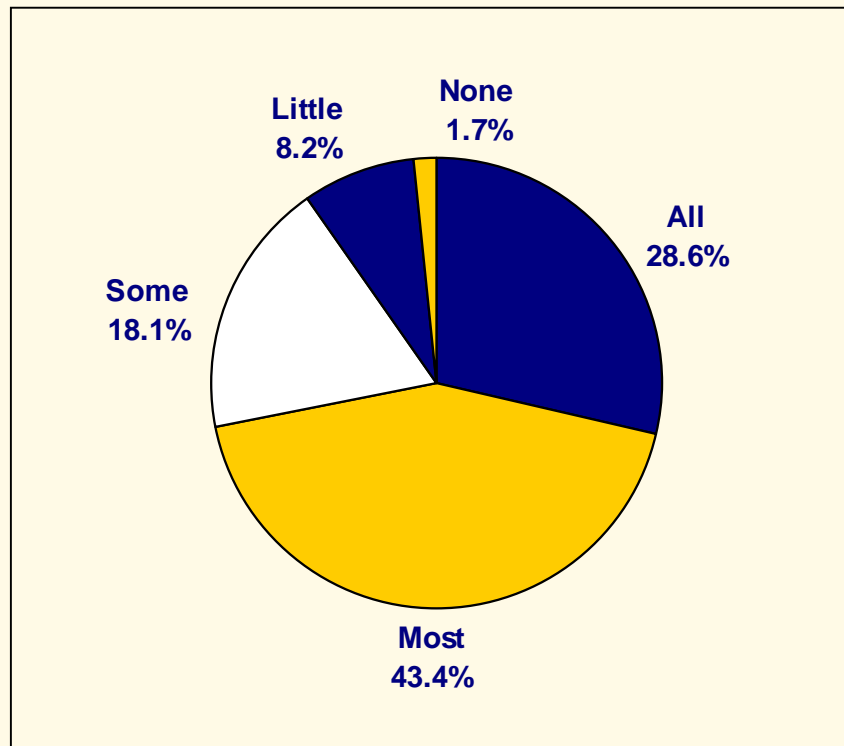
Valid n=3598

Question 28:
Are the number and length of these sessions adequate to meet your counseling needs?



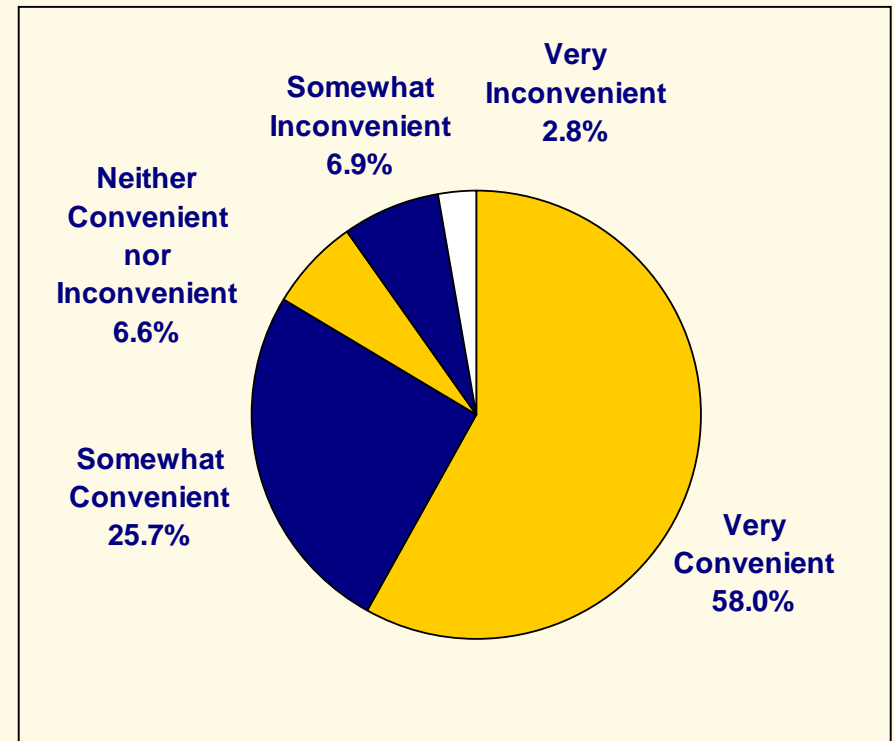
Valid n=2753

Question 29:
In general, how much of what you **NEEDED TO KNOW** did you get from these meetings?



Valid n=2758

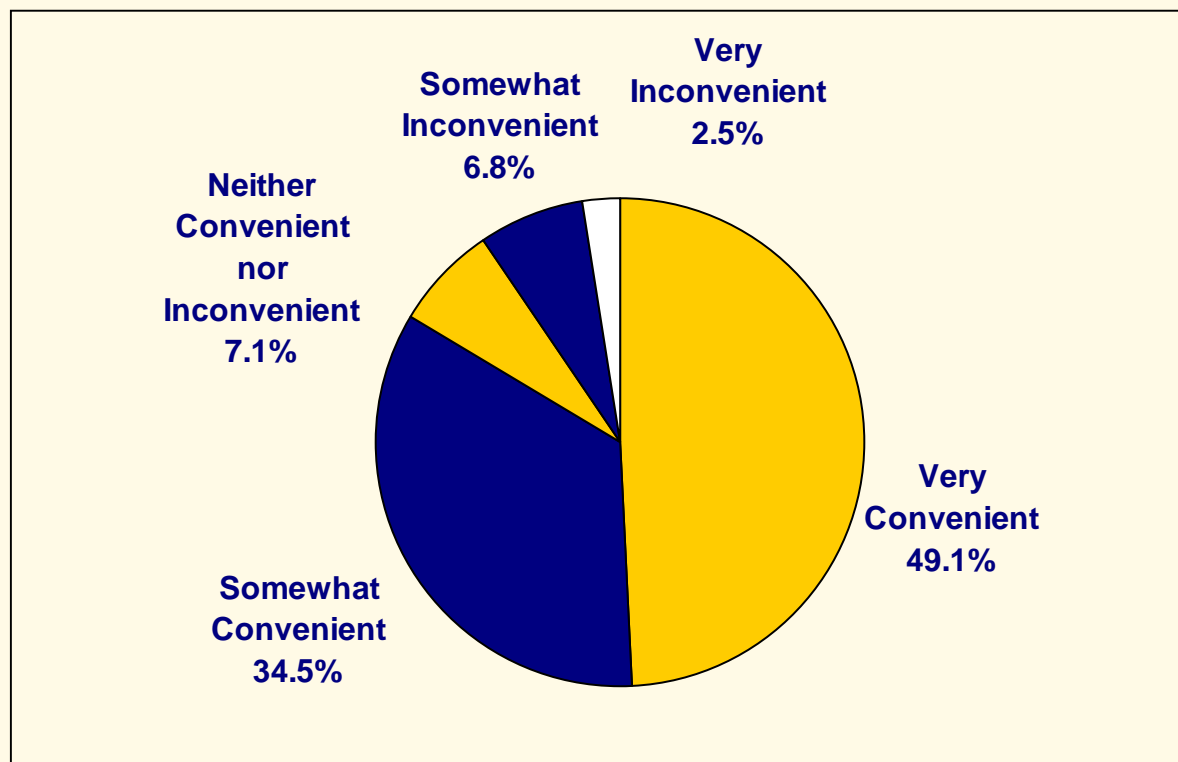
Question 30:
How convenient is the **LOCATION** where these meetings are held?



Valid n=2763

Question 31:

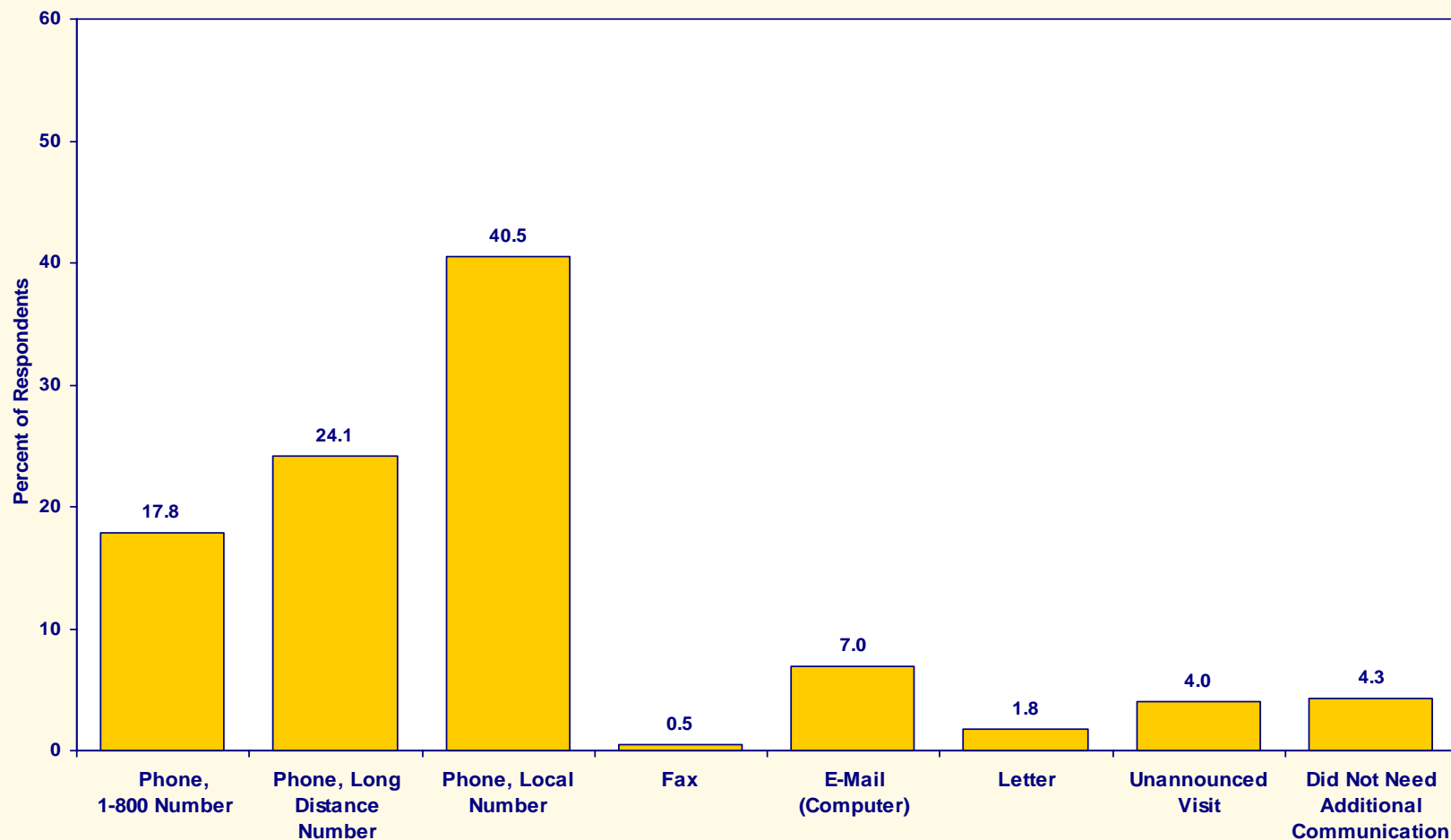
In general, how convenient is the TIME scheduled for these meetings?



Valid n=2760

Question 32:

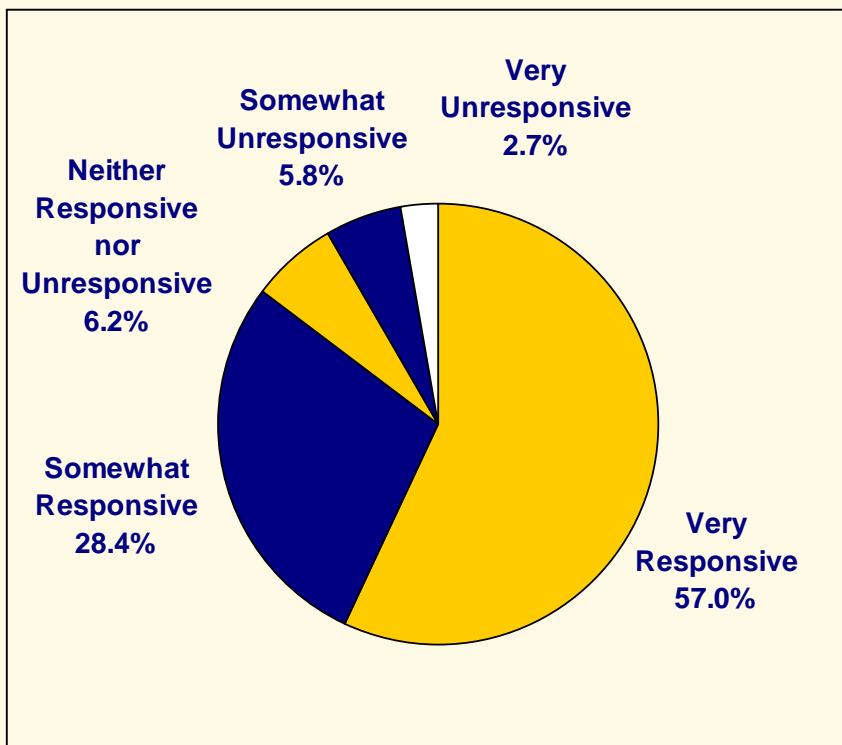
Aside from scheduled visits, what is the **PRIMARY** method you use to contact your counselor?



Valid n=3267

Question 33:

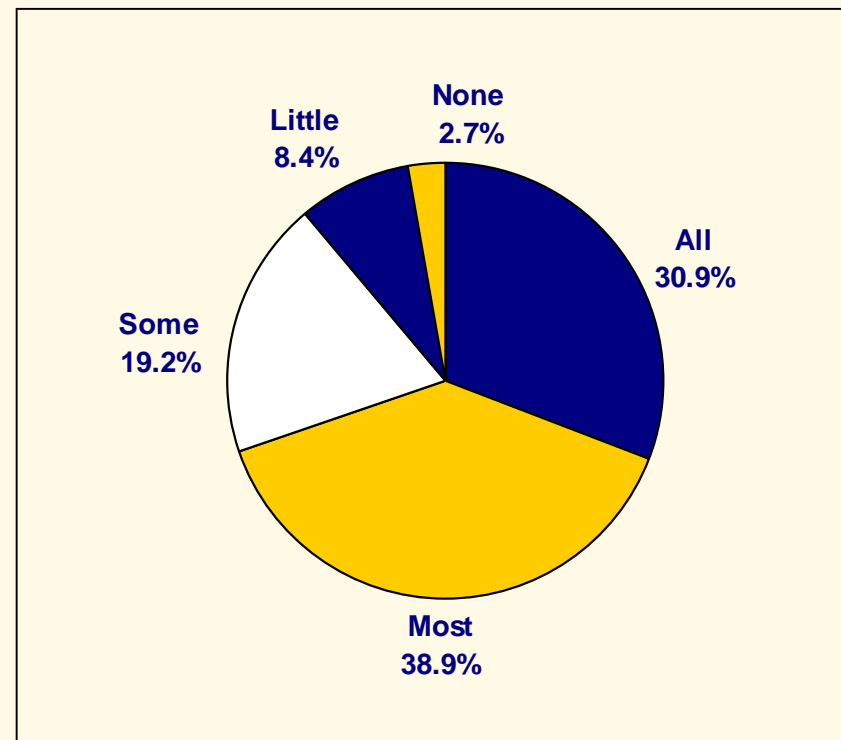
How responsive was your counselor to your contact through this method?



Valid n=3432

Question 34:

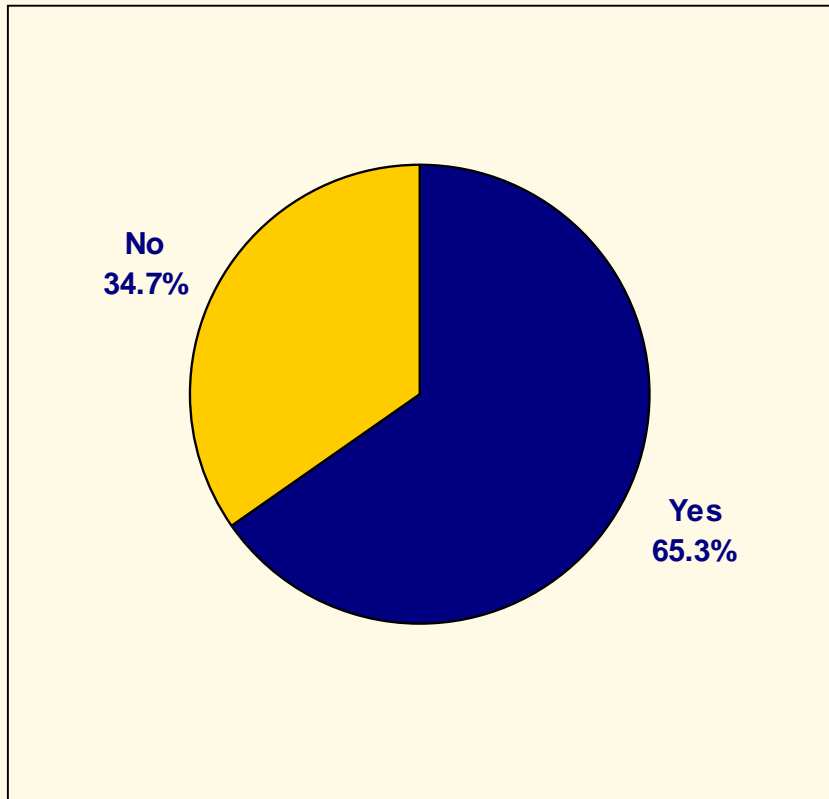
In general, how much of what you NEEDED TO KNOW did you get from this method of contact?



Valid n=3439

Question 35:

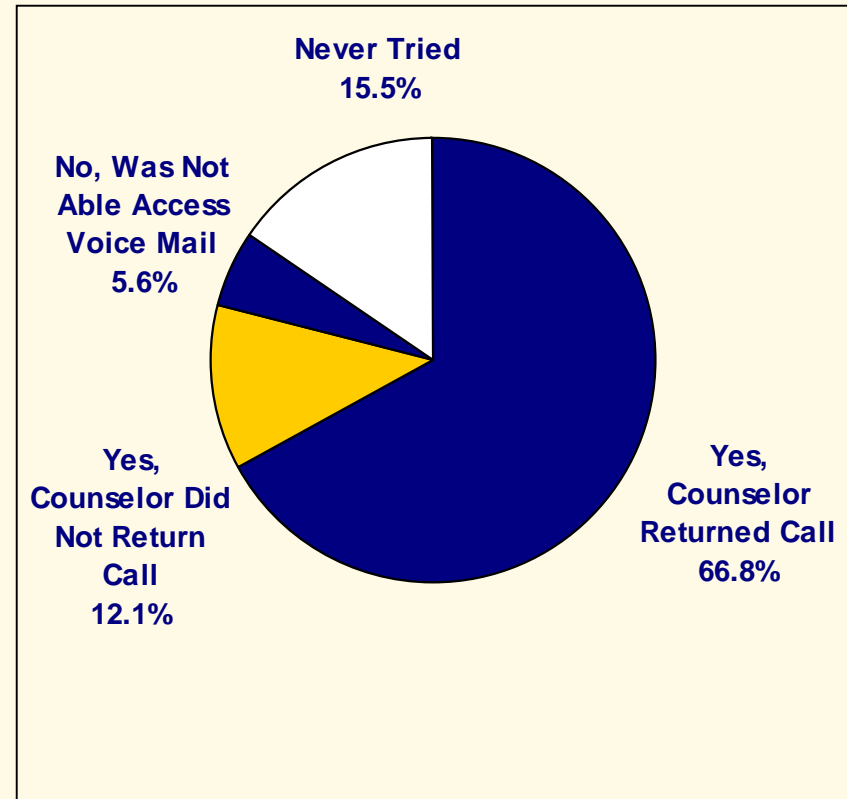
Were you generally able to get the information you needed on the first call or contact?



Valid n=3439

Question 36:

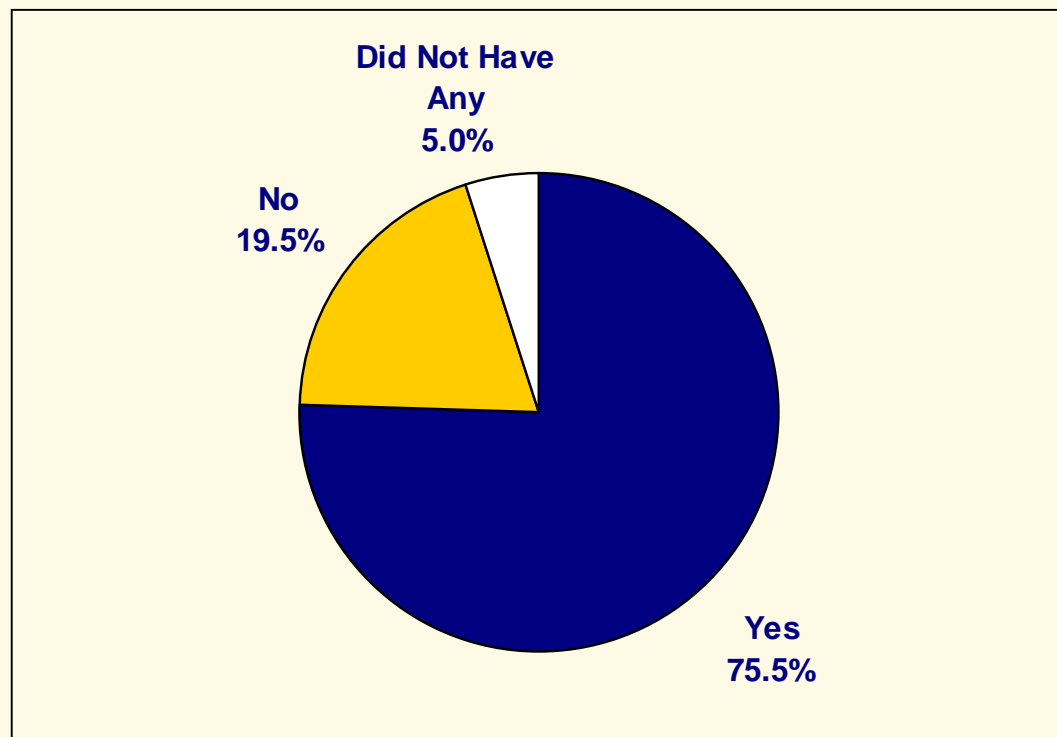
Were you able to access voice mail in order to leave your counselor a message?



Valid n=3429

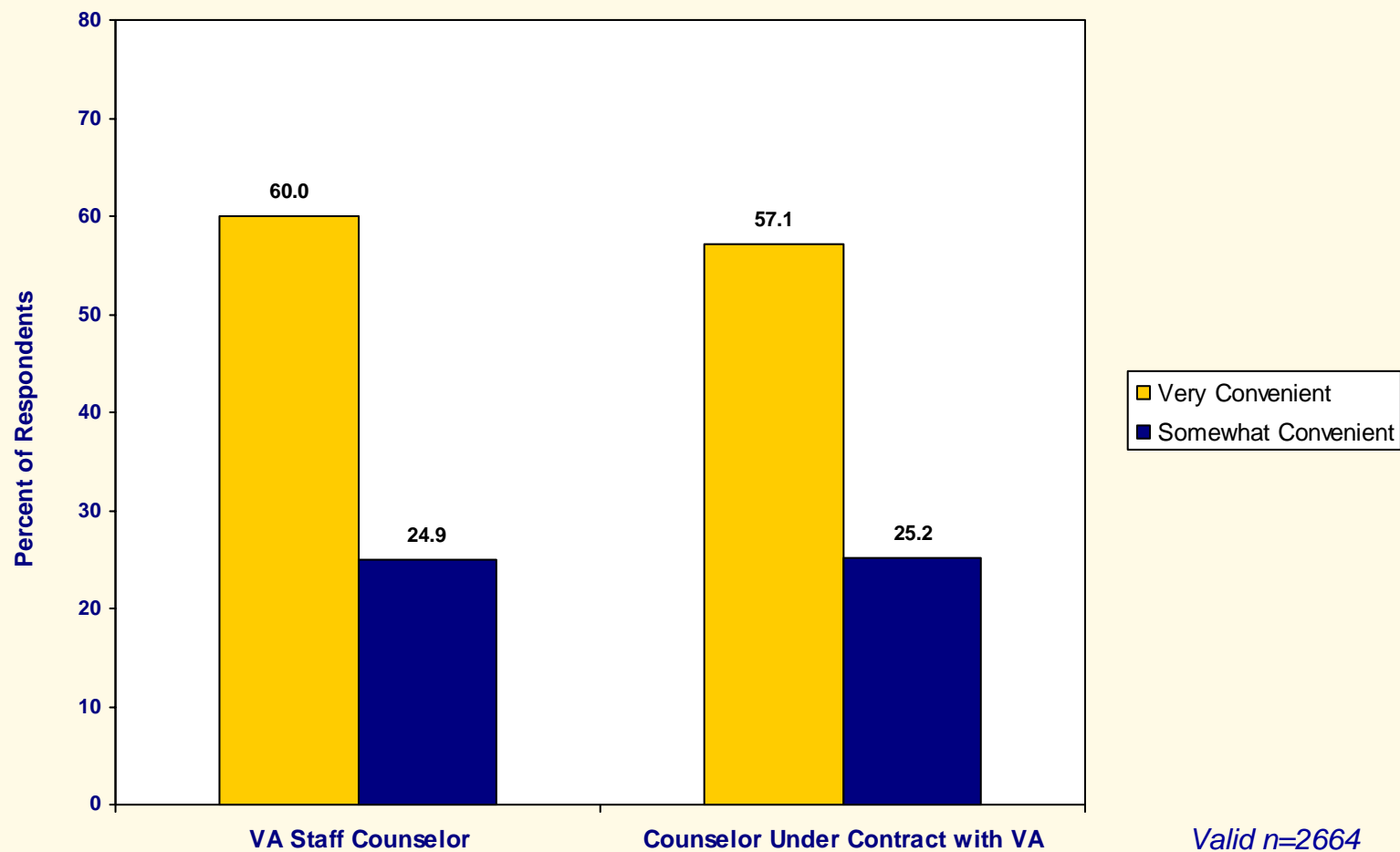
Question 37:

Does your counselor fully address all your questions, concerns, or complaints?



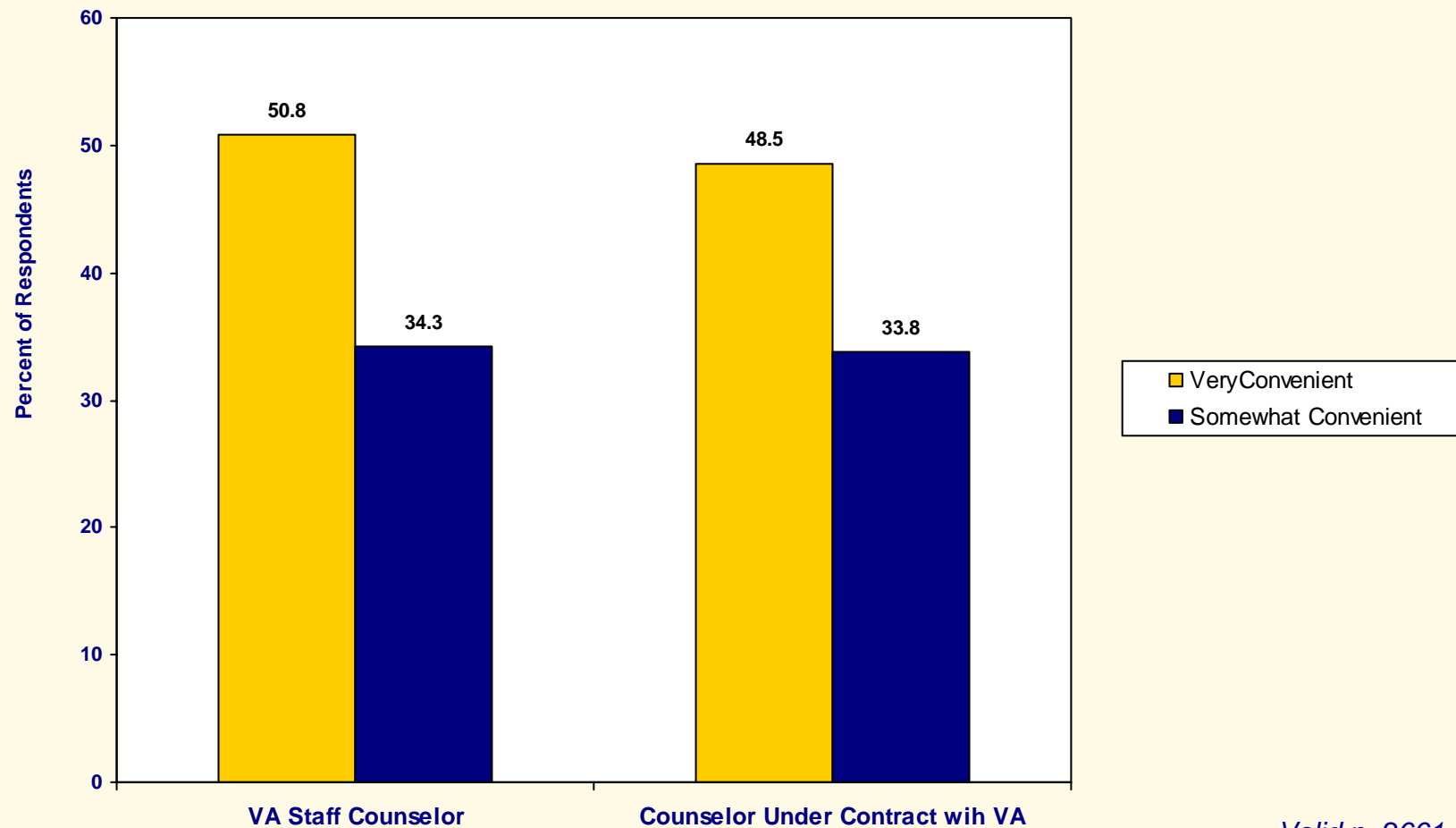
Valid n=3568

Question 30 by Question 4:
Convenience of location for in-person meetings by type of counselor during this phase of program.



Question 31 by Question 4:

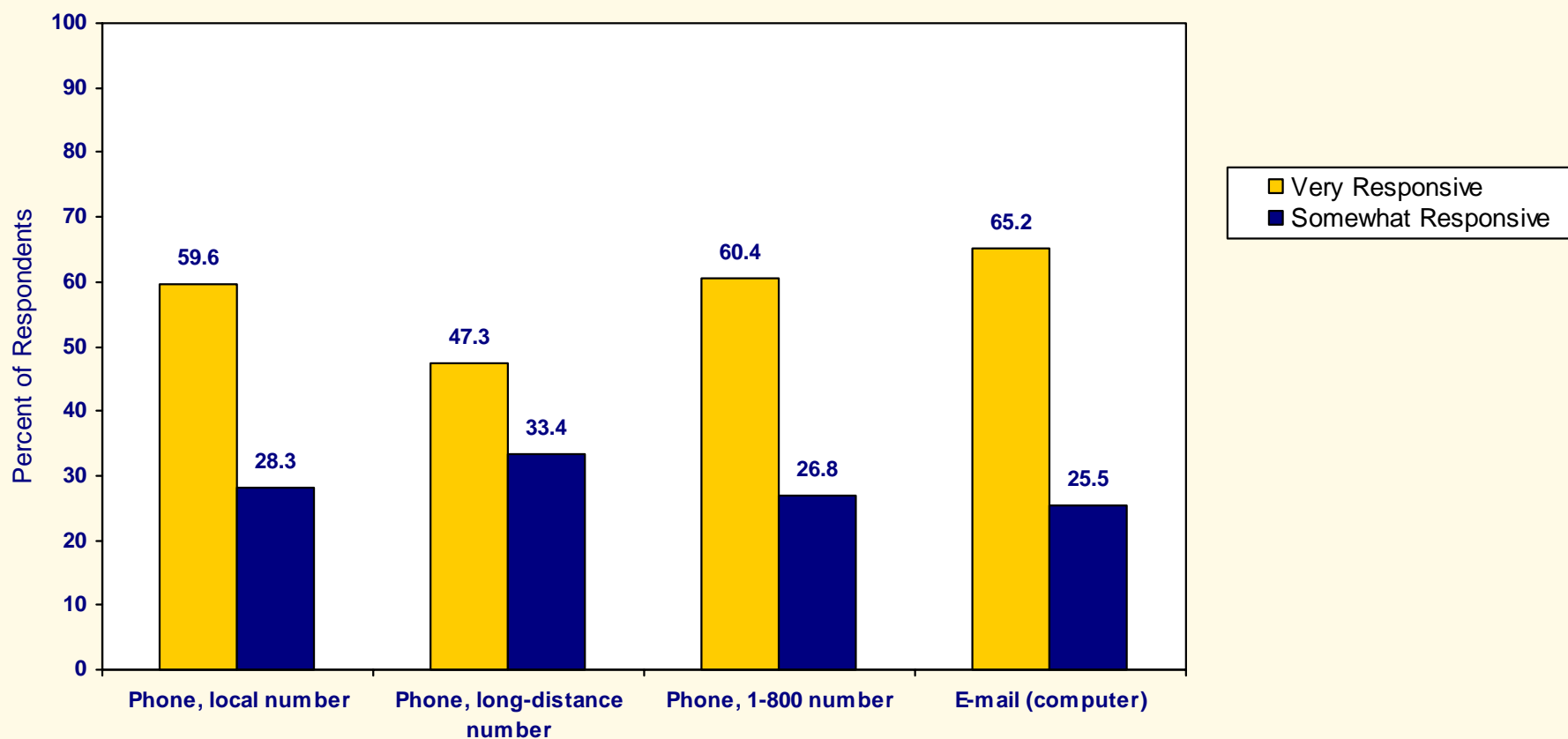
Convenience of time scheduled for in-person meetings by type of counselor during this phase of program.



Valid n=2661

Question 32 by Question 33:

Responsiveness of counselor by primary method of contact, aside from scheduled visits.

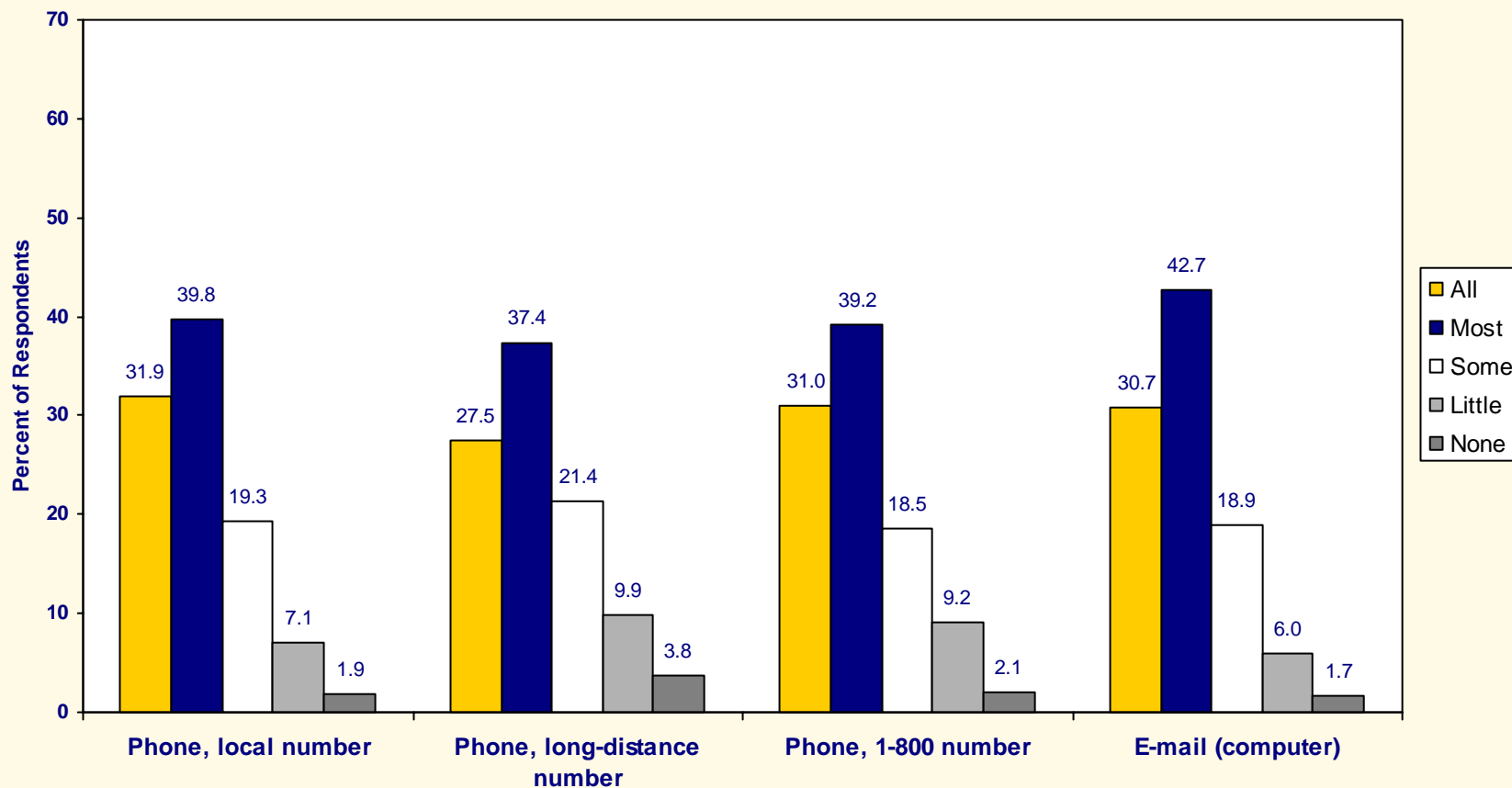


Note: The chart presents data on the 4 most frequently reported methods of contact, aside from scheduled visits.

Valid n=3114

Question 32 by Question 34:

Amount of needed information obtained by primary method of contact, aside from scheduled visits.



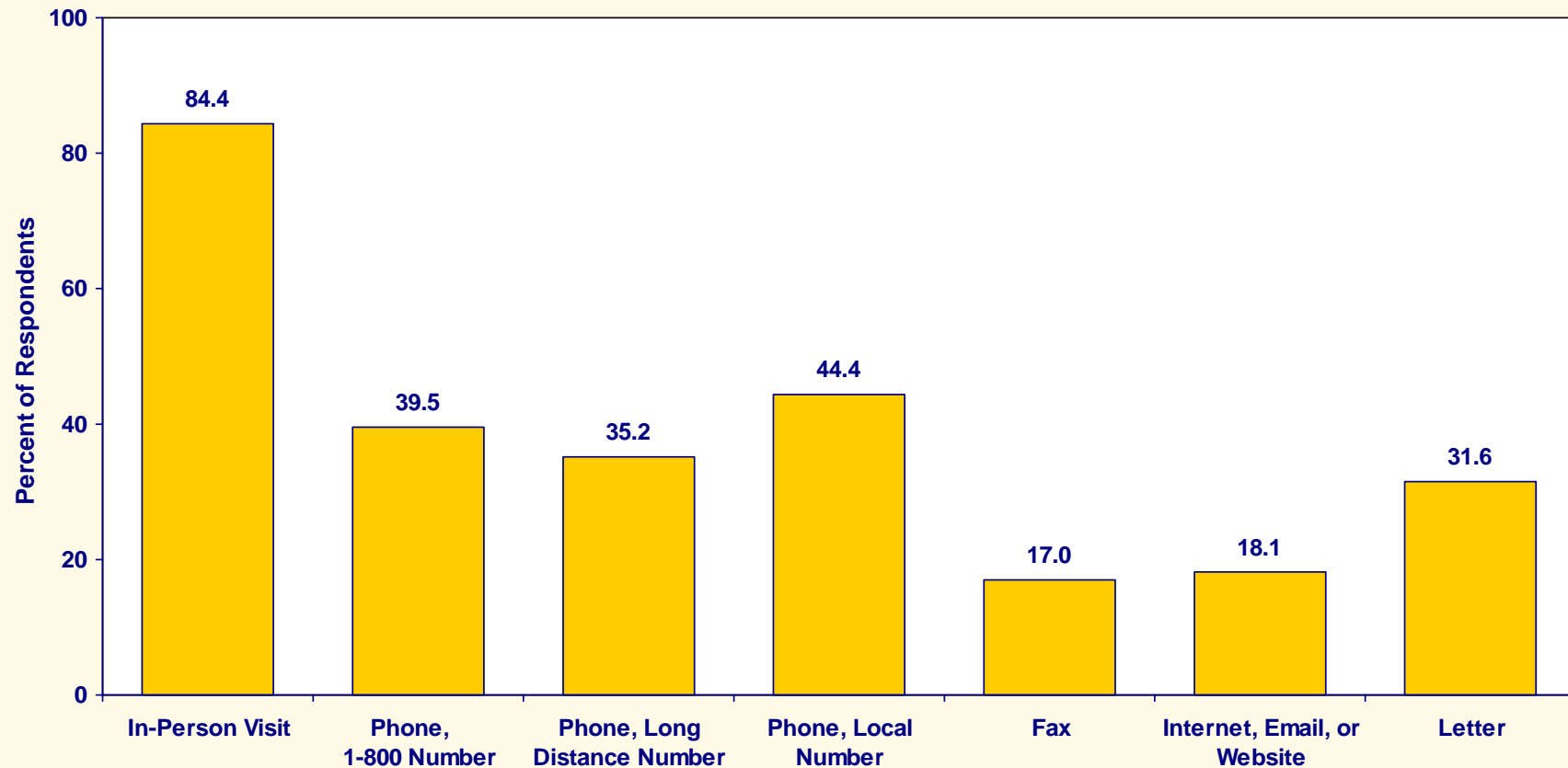
Note: The chart presents data on the 4 most frequently reported sources of information, aside from scheduled visits.

Valid n=3118

Survey Findings:
Access to the VR&E Program

Question 38:

Looking back to your contacts with the VR&E program thus far, which methods of contact did you EVER use?

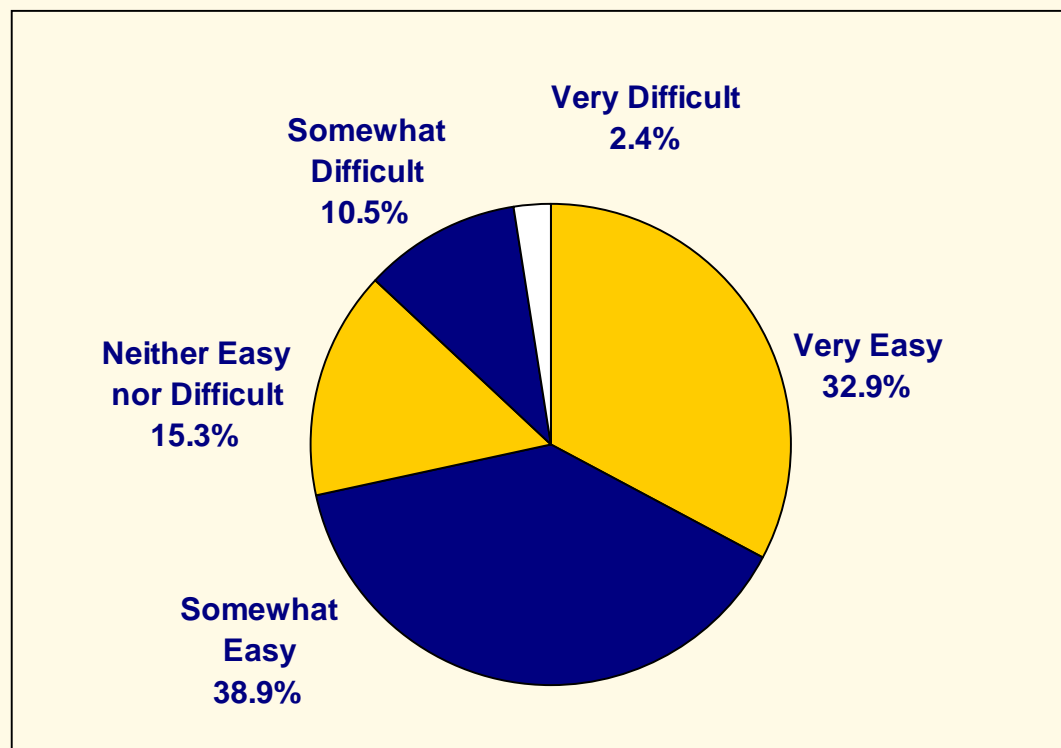


Note: As respondents could mark all responses that apply, the percentages do not add to 100%.

Valid n=3571

Question 39:

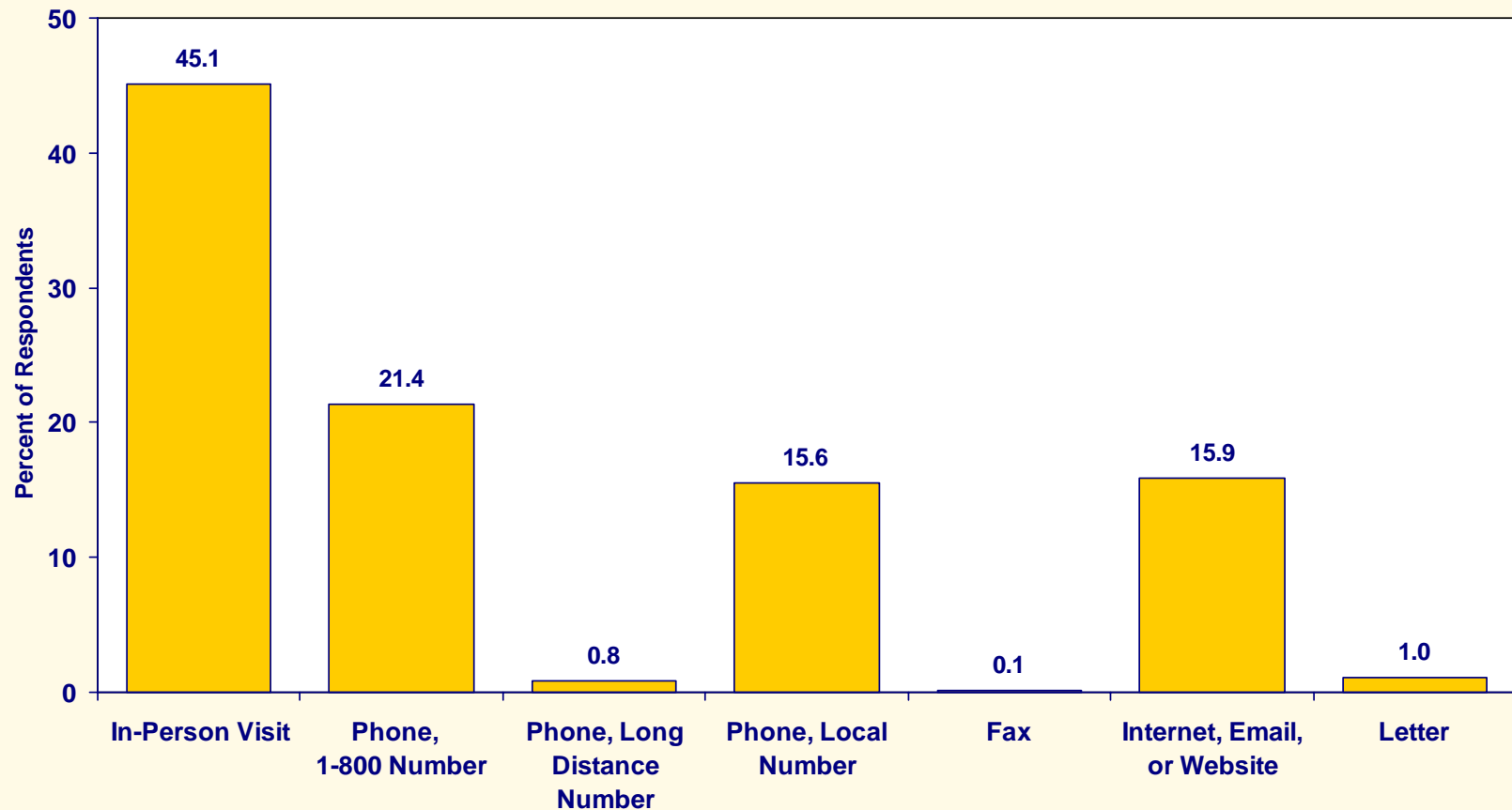
In general, how easy was it for you to obtain information from the VR&E program?



Valid n=3574

Question 40:

Which method of contact with the VR&E program would you prefer, if you could get the same degree of service?



Valid n=3227

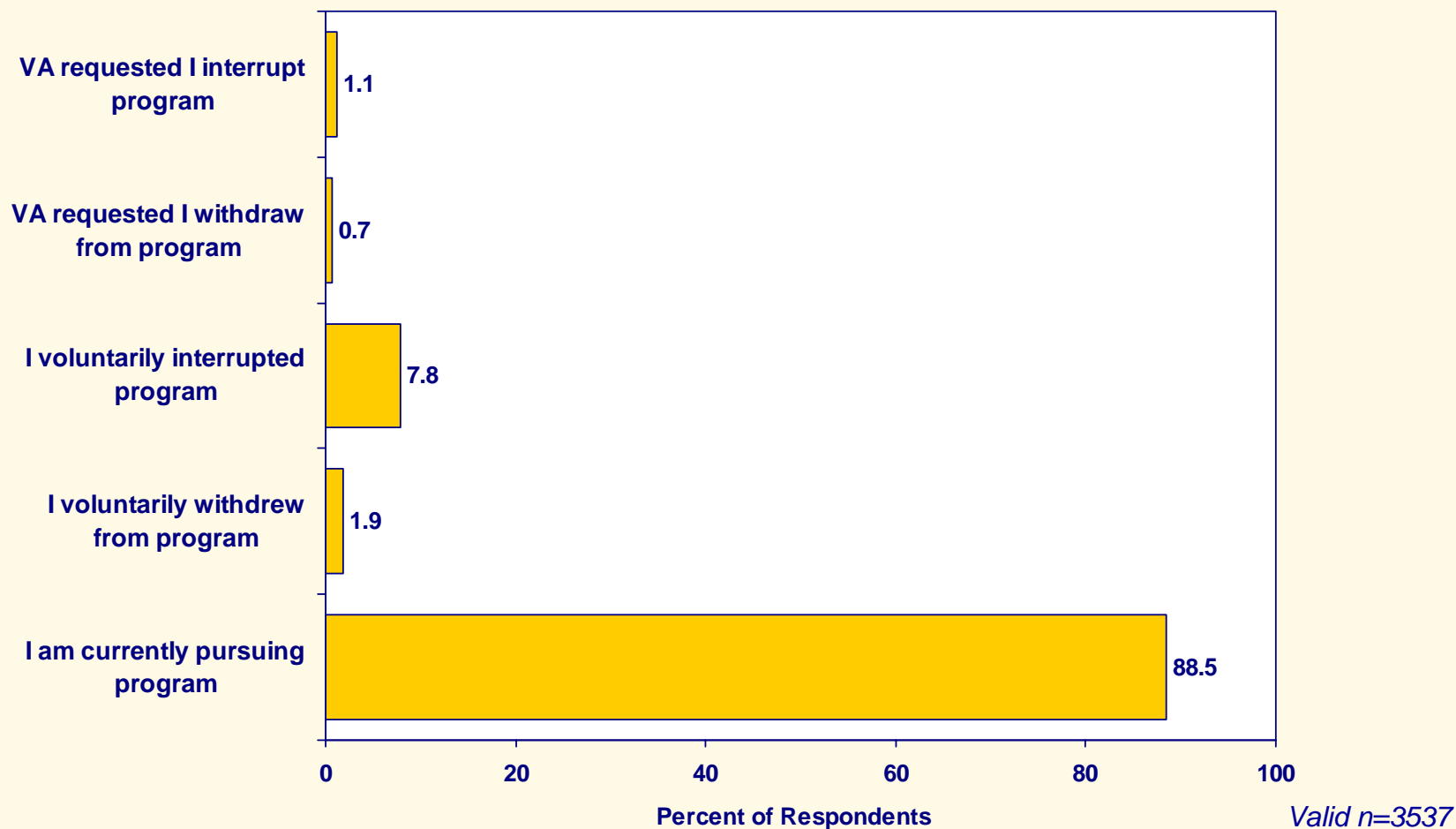
Survey Findings:
Current Status in the VR&E Program

Current Status in the VR&E Program

47

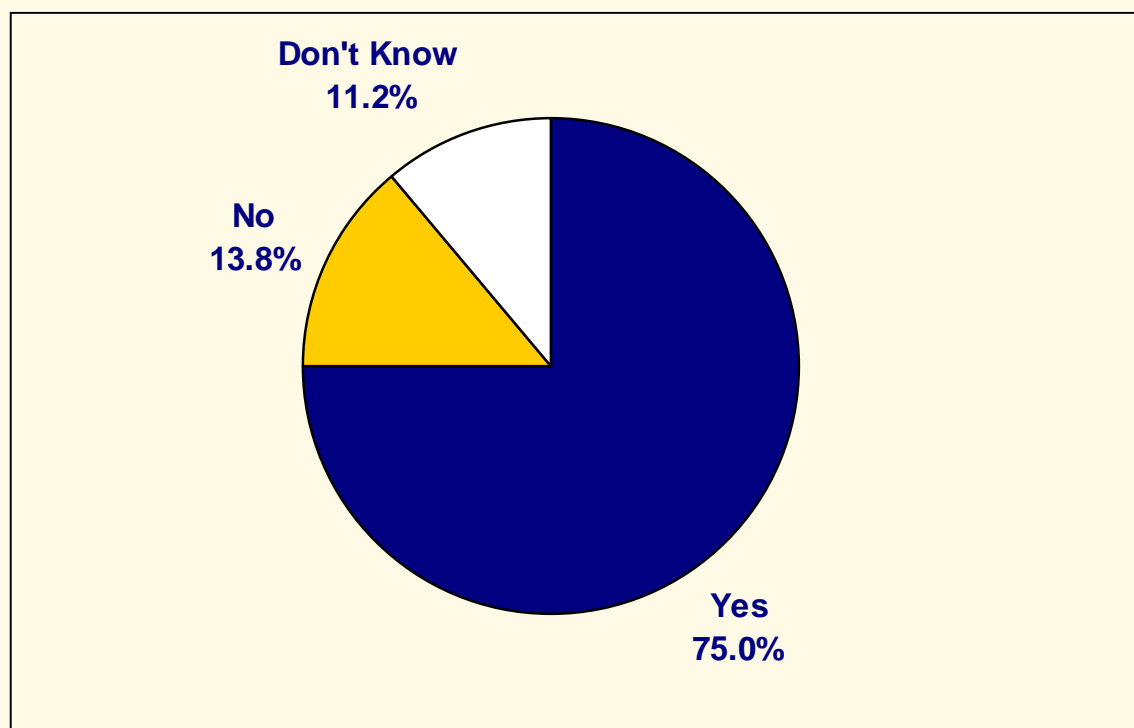
Question 41:

How would you best describe your **CURRENT** status with regard to the VA VR&E program?



Question 42:

Did VA tell you the reasons why you were interrupted or withdrawn from the program?



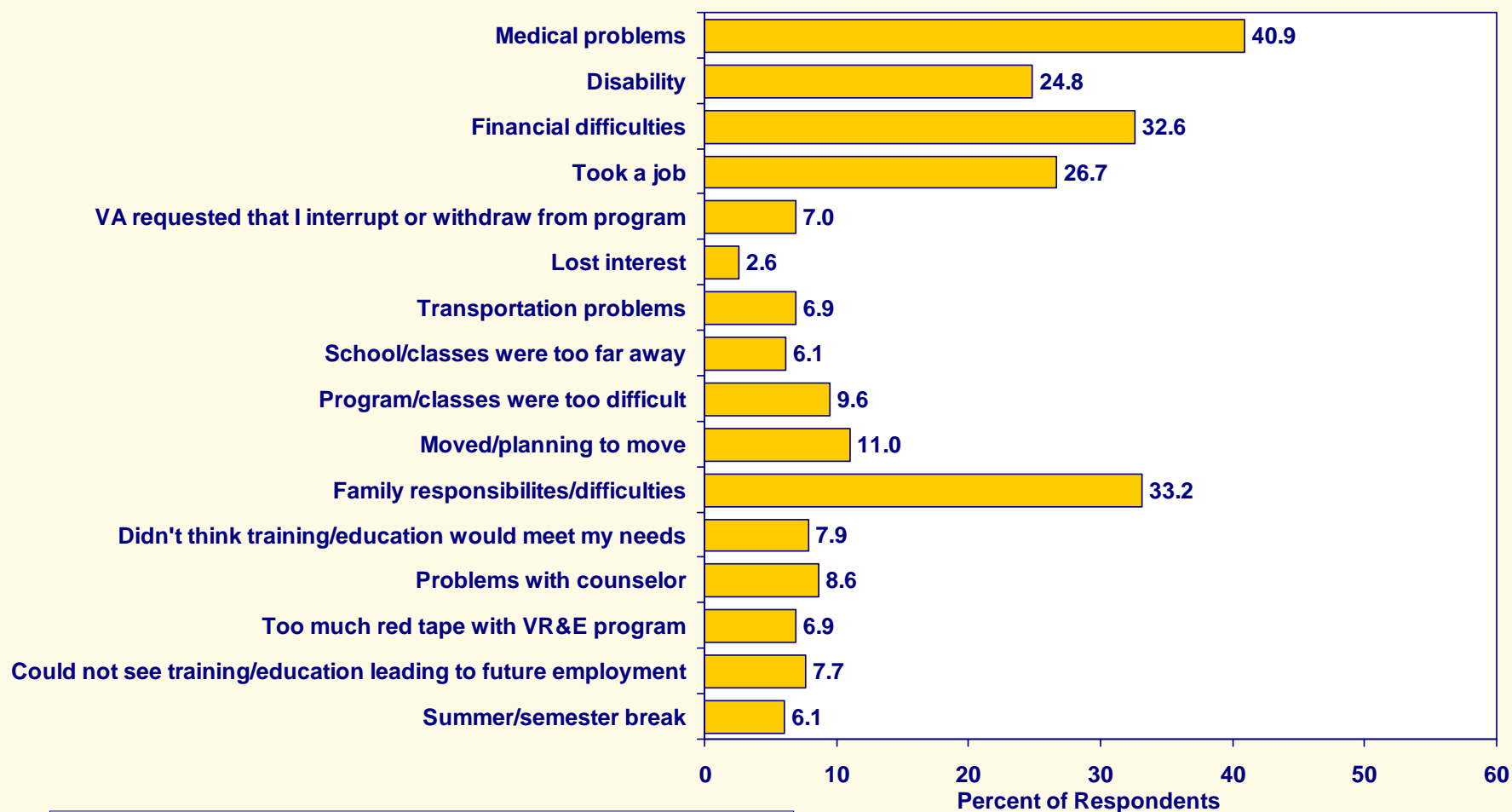
Valid n=86

Current Status in the VR&E Program

49

Question 43:

Why did you interrupt or withdraw from the training or education phase of your plan?

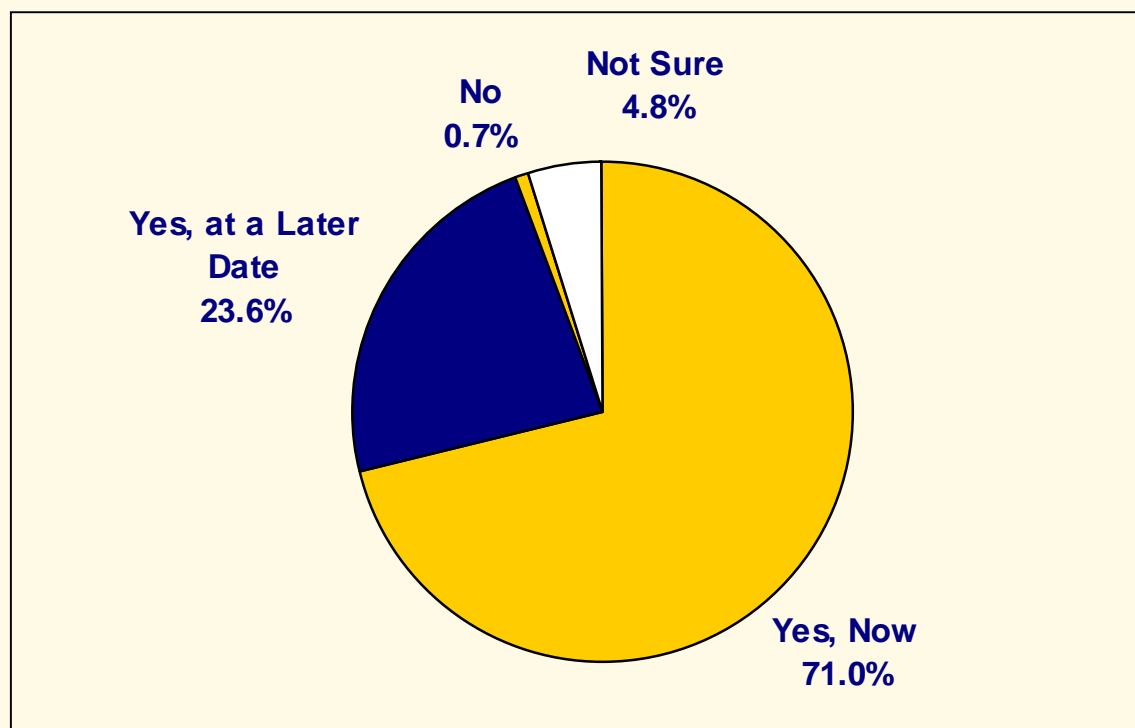


Note: As respondents could mark all responses that apply, the percentages do not add to 100%.

Valid n=432

Question 44:

Do you plan to complete your rehabilitation program now or at a later date?

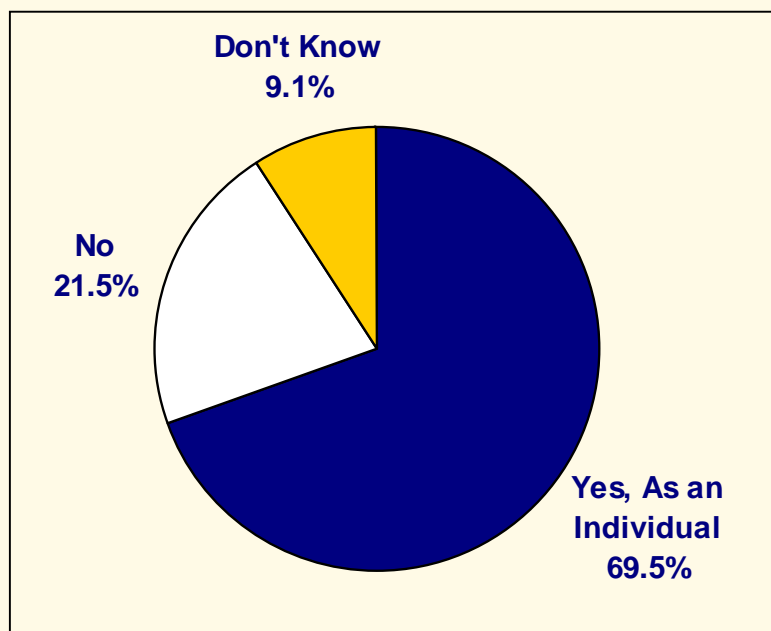


Valid n=3455

Overall Program Impressions

Question 45:

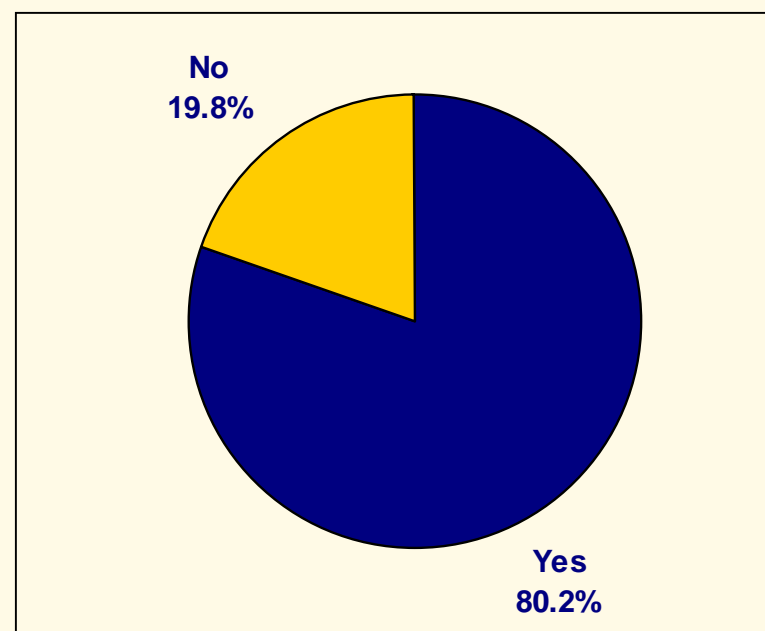
Do you feel that the VA Vocational Rehabilitation Program has treated you as an individual, not just a case to be managed?



Valid n=3602

Question 46:

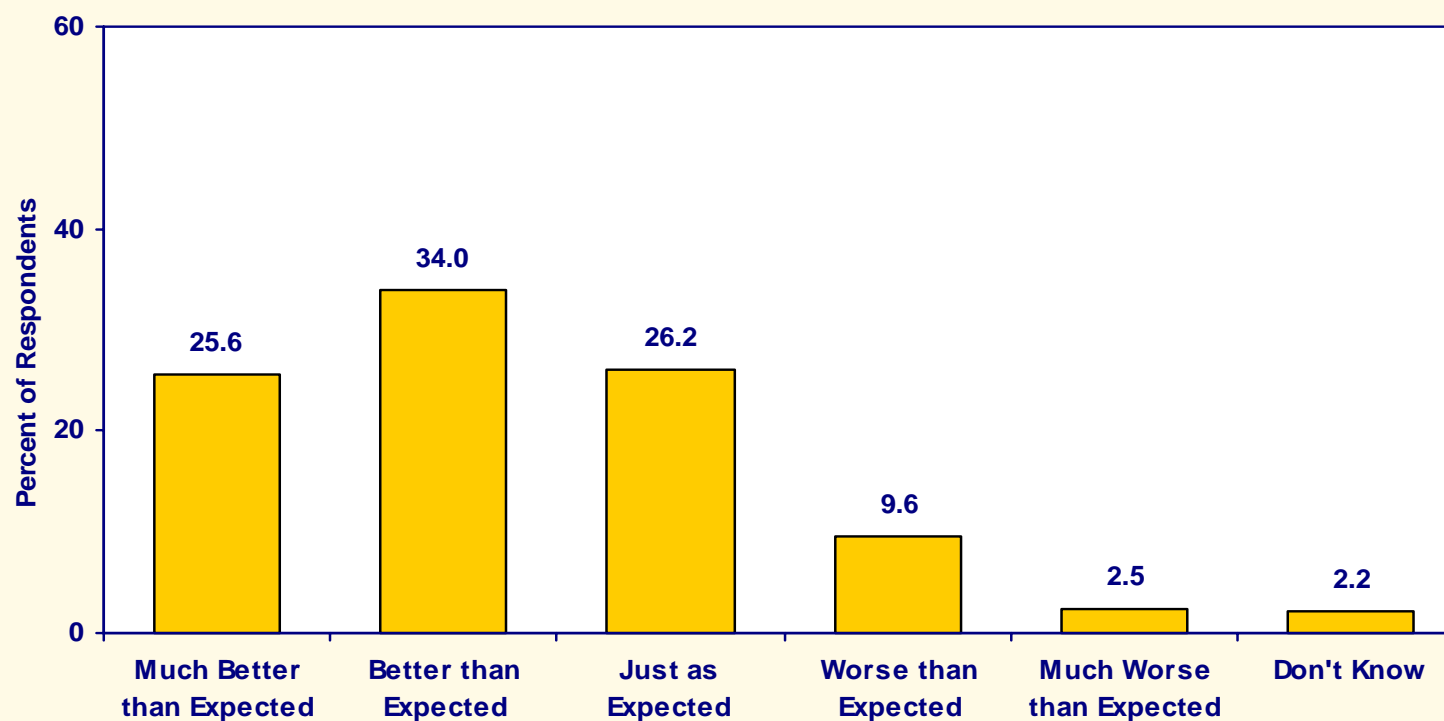
Overall, has the REHABILITATION process reflected the courtesy, compassion, and respect you would expect as a veteran of the United States?



Valid n=3603

Question 47:

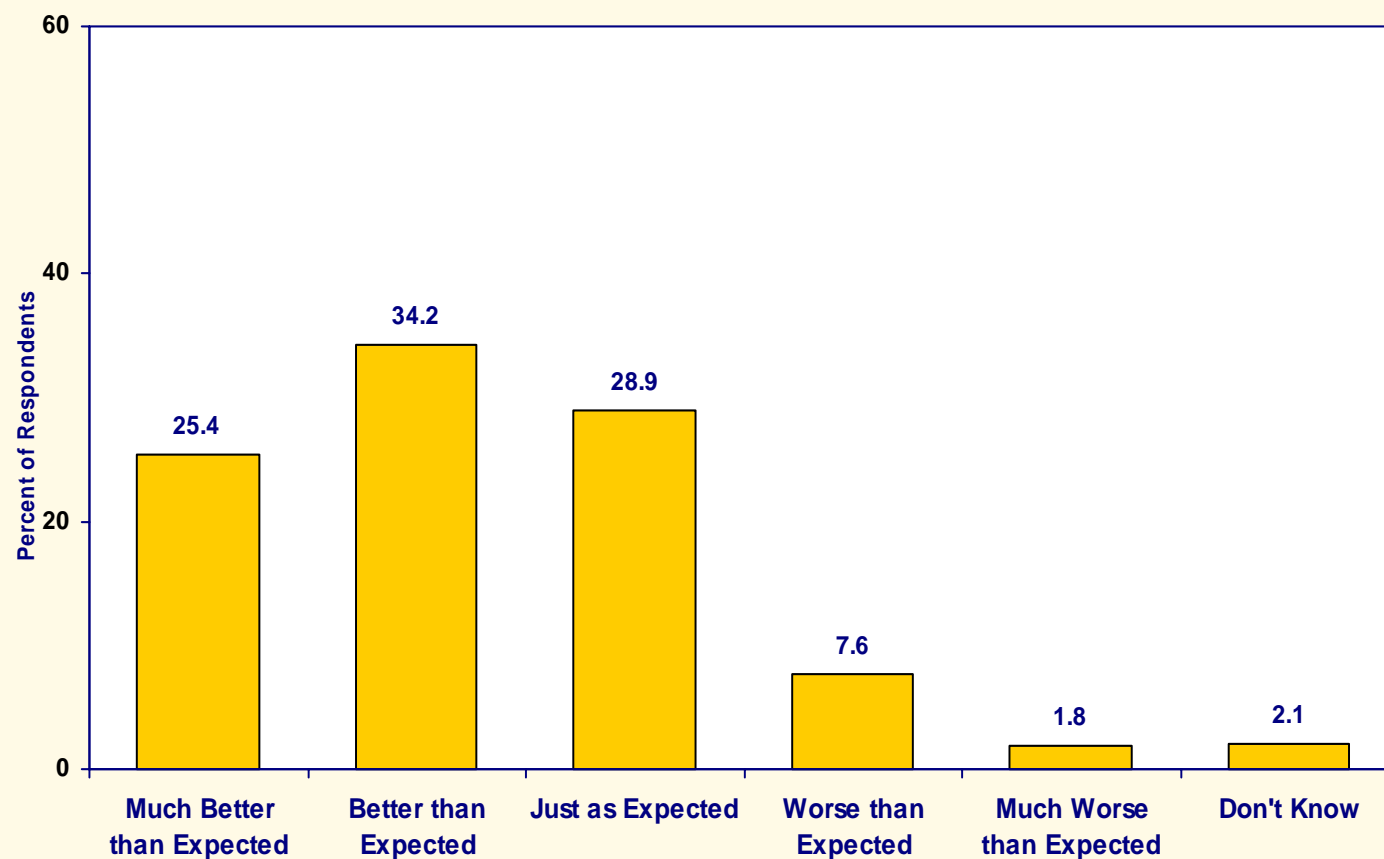
Thus far, how well has the program met your EXPECTATIONS?



Valid n=3612

Question 48:

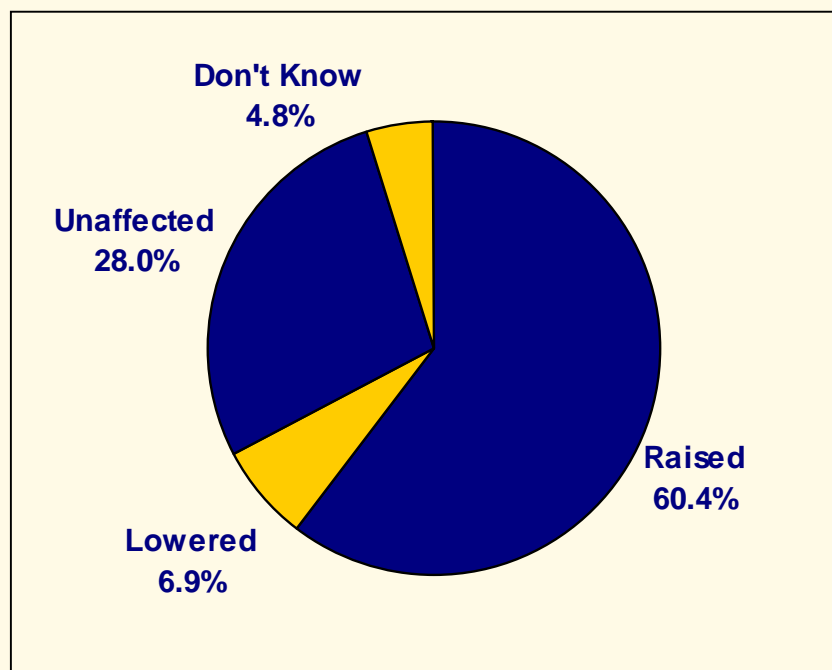
Thus far, how well has the program met your training or educational NEEDS?



Valid n=3610

Question 49:

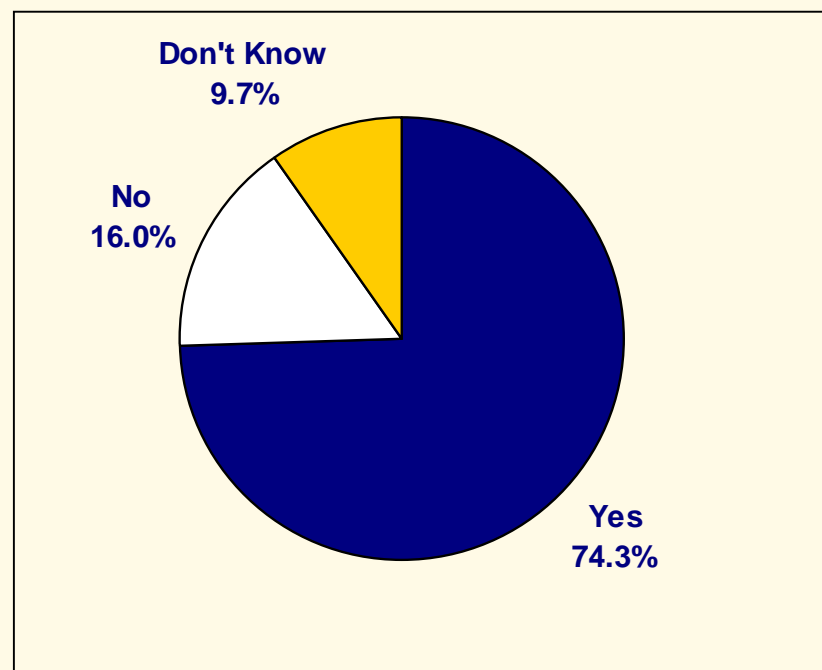
Have your **EDUCATIONAL** goals been raised, lowered, or unaffected as a result of your interaction with the VR&E program?



Valid n=3607

Question 50:

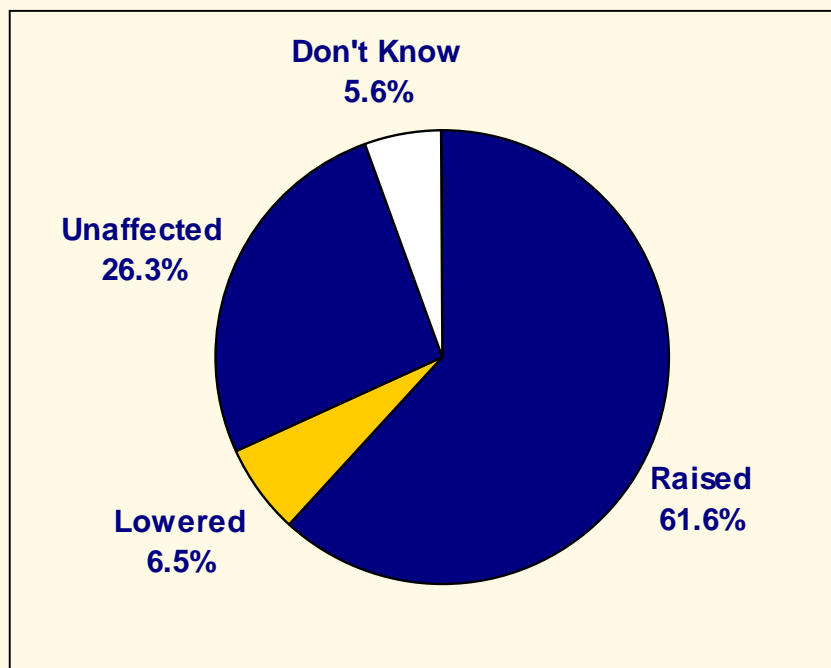
Are your educational goals more realistic as a result of this program?



Valid n=3606

Question 51:

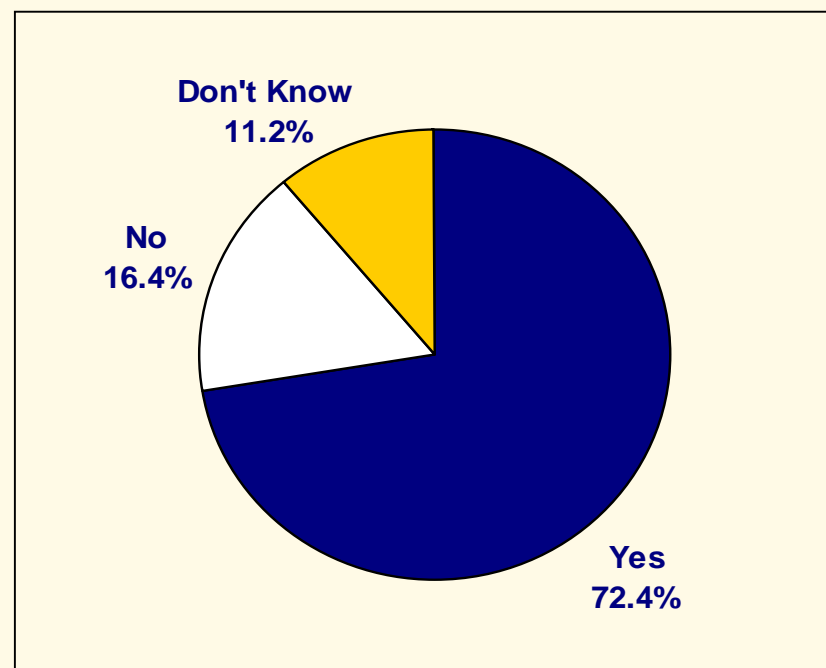
Have your **CAREER** goals been raised, lowered, or unaffected as a result of your interaction with the VR&E program?



Valid n=3605

Question 52:

Are your career goals more realistic as a result of this program?



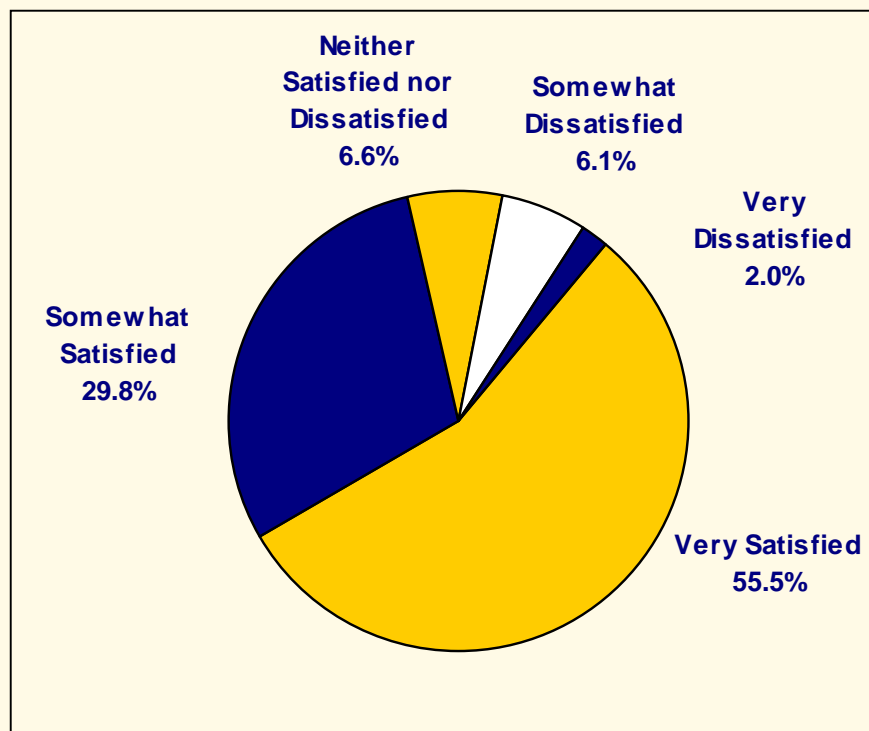
Valid n=3596

Overall Program Impressions

57

Question 53:

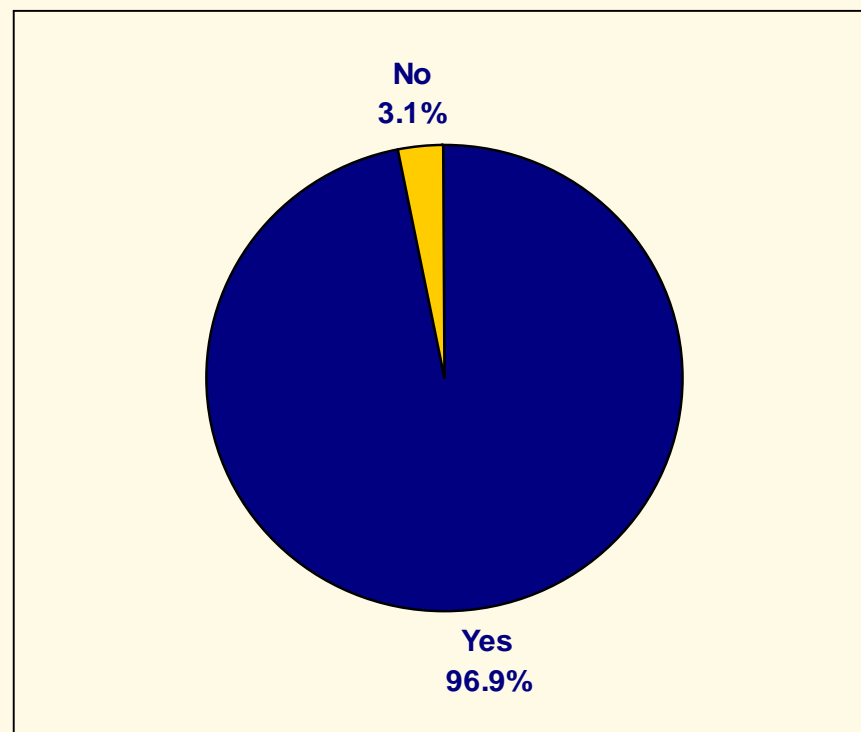
Overall, how satisfied are you with the **TRAINING OR EDUCATION** phase of your plan?



Valid n=3606

Question 54:

Would you recommend this program to other disabled veterans?



Valid n=3592

UNDERSTANDING QUADRANT ANALYSIS

Quadrant analysis is a useful tool for determining which individual performance areas need improvement in order to raise the overall quality of service. The analysis involves determining the importance of individual performance areas (how meaningful an area is to the veteran) and VA's performance in each area. Generally, items with high importance but relatively low performance are those which deserve immediate attention.

Each of the variables represented in the Quadrant Analysis graph are plotted on the basis of:

- 1) **Importance:** a variable's correlation with the overall satisfaction with the program area
- 2) **Performance:** a variable's top-box percent (the percent of people who answered positively to the question).

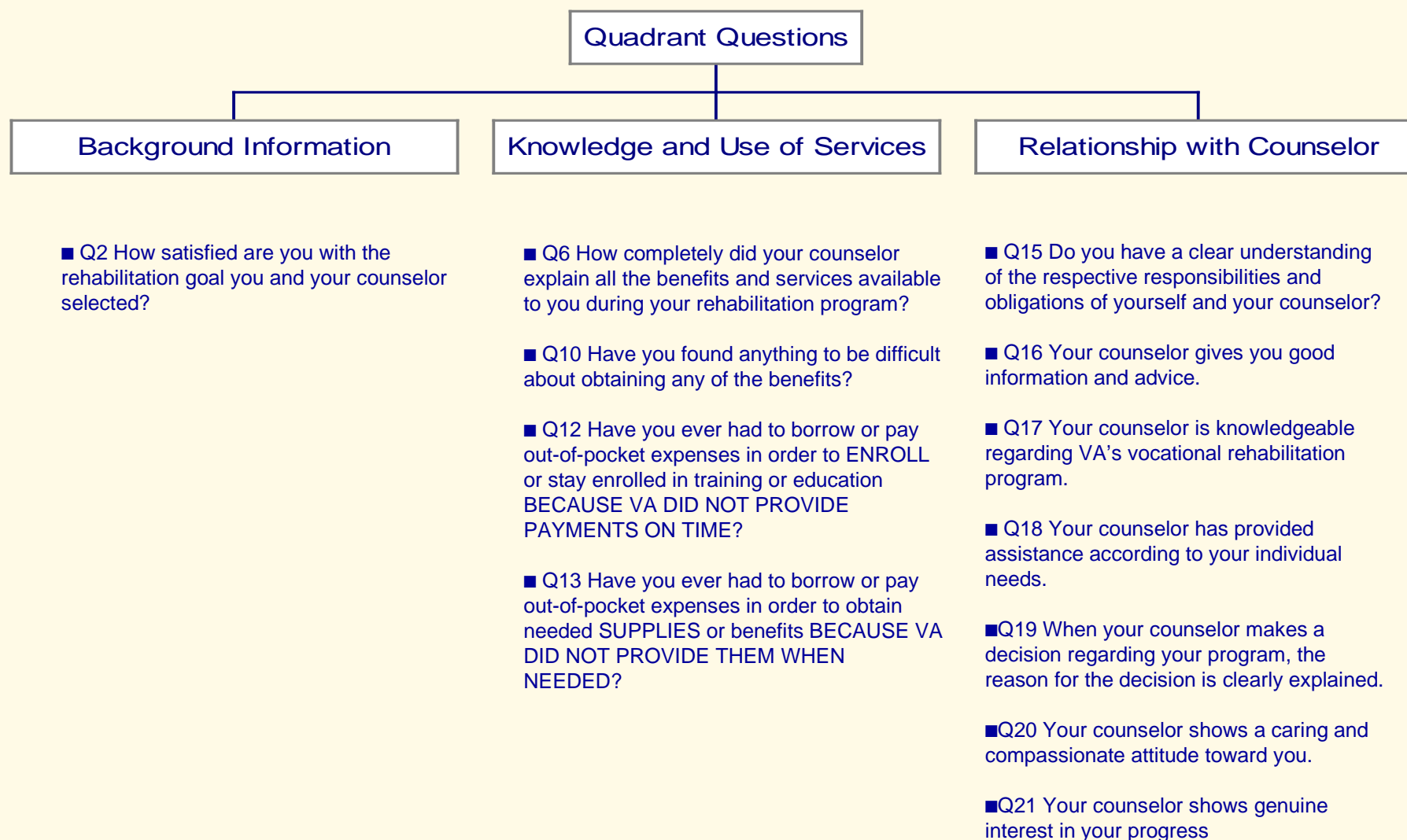
Variable correlations with the overall satisfaction with the program area are used to determine the degree to which variables are related to overall satisfaction. Zero indicates no correlation, and 1 indicates perfect correlation. The closer a variable's correlation (Importance) is to 1, the stronger the variable's relationship is with the overall satisfaction with the program area. Variables that have stronger correlations are considered to have higher importance.

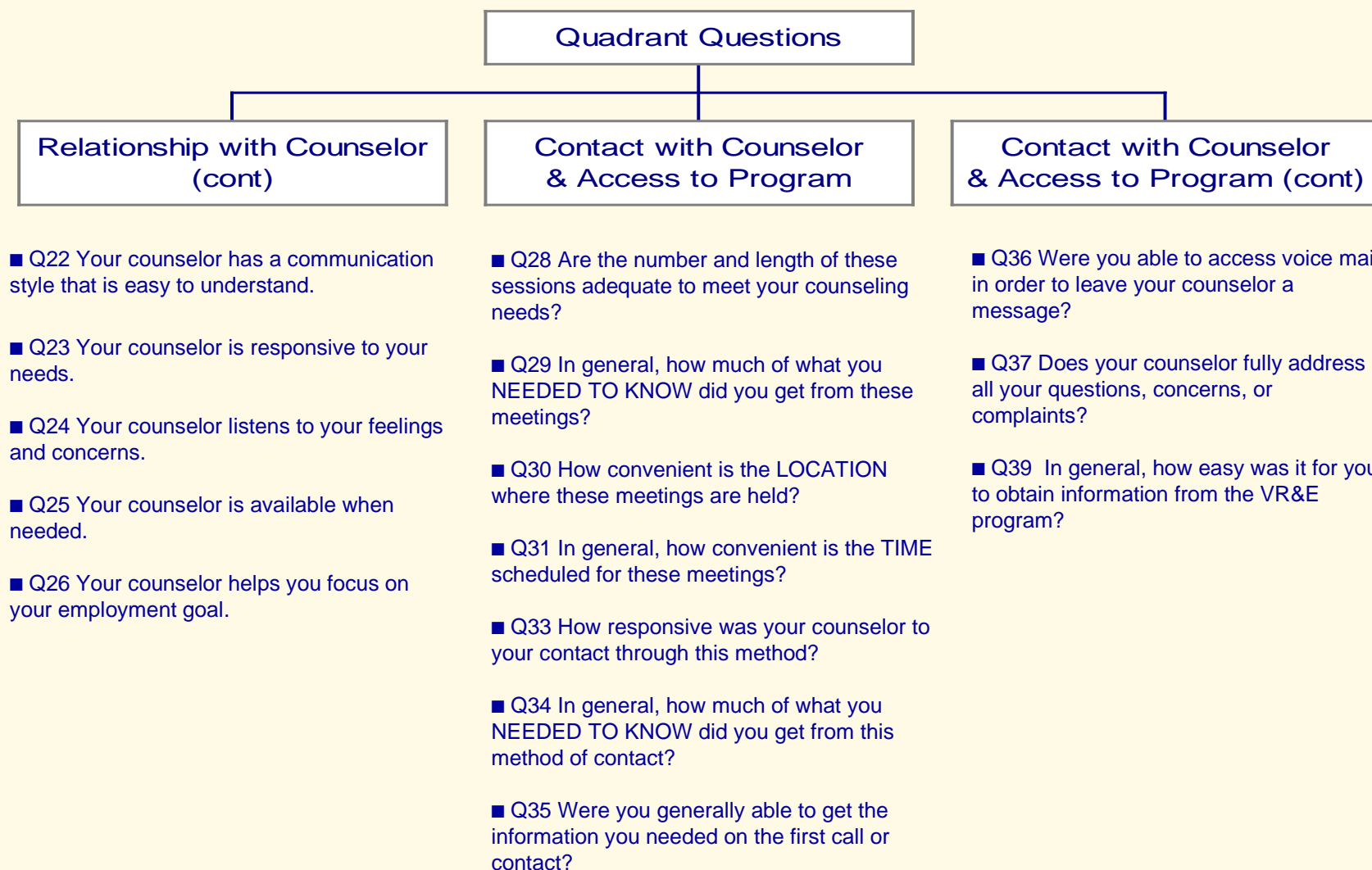
Top-box percent represents how well VA is performing within a given area (for example, the percent who indicated that the length of time it took VA to determine entitlement to VR&E services was somewhat or very reasonable).

The quadrant analysis graph is divided into four quadrants (sections) based on the following combinations of the plotted location of a variable:

- Quadrant I: Critical Improvement Areas (high importance, low performance)**
- Quadrant II: Maintain Relationship Building Variables (high importance, high performance)**
- Quadrant III: Lower Return on High Performance (low importance, high performance)**
- Quadrant IV: Lower Return on Investment (low importance, low performance)**

The horizontal lines in the plots represent importance and are placed at .50, which indicates relatively high correlation, and thus, relatively high importance. The vertical lines represent performance and are placed at 75 percent. The quadrant lines can be moved up or down, left or right, to include more or fewer variables in each quadrant.





QUADRANT SCORES

Importance and satisfaction scores for training and education questions, ranked by importance
(Based on respondents' overall satisfaction, Question 53*)

Question	Importance Score	Satisfaction Rating
2	.60	86.7%
18	.53	72.4%
23	.52	70.0%
16	.50	72.1%
26	.49	54.6%
19	.48	69.3%
21	.48	68.3%
24	.47	70.3%
39	.47	71.8%
6	.46	78.3%
17	.46	79.8%
20	.46	70.7%
22	.45	75.4%
25	.45	60.7%
37	.44	79.4%
34	.43	69.8%
29	.42	72.0%

*Question 53: Overall, how satisfied are you with the TRAINING OR EDUCATION phase of your plan?

QUADRANT SCORES (Continued)

Question	Importance Score	Satisfaction Rating
10	.40	62.8%
15	.40	78.8%
33	.39	85.4%
28	.35	82.5%
31	.35	83.6%
35	.34	65.3%
30	.28	83.7%
13	.23	63.0%
36	.23	79.1%
12	.19	85.0%

QUADRANTS I AND II

The information below highlights the questions from the Quadrant Analysis which fell into Quadrant I or Quadrant II.

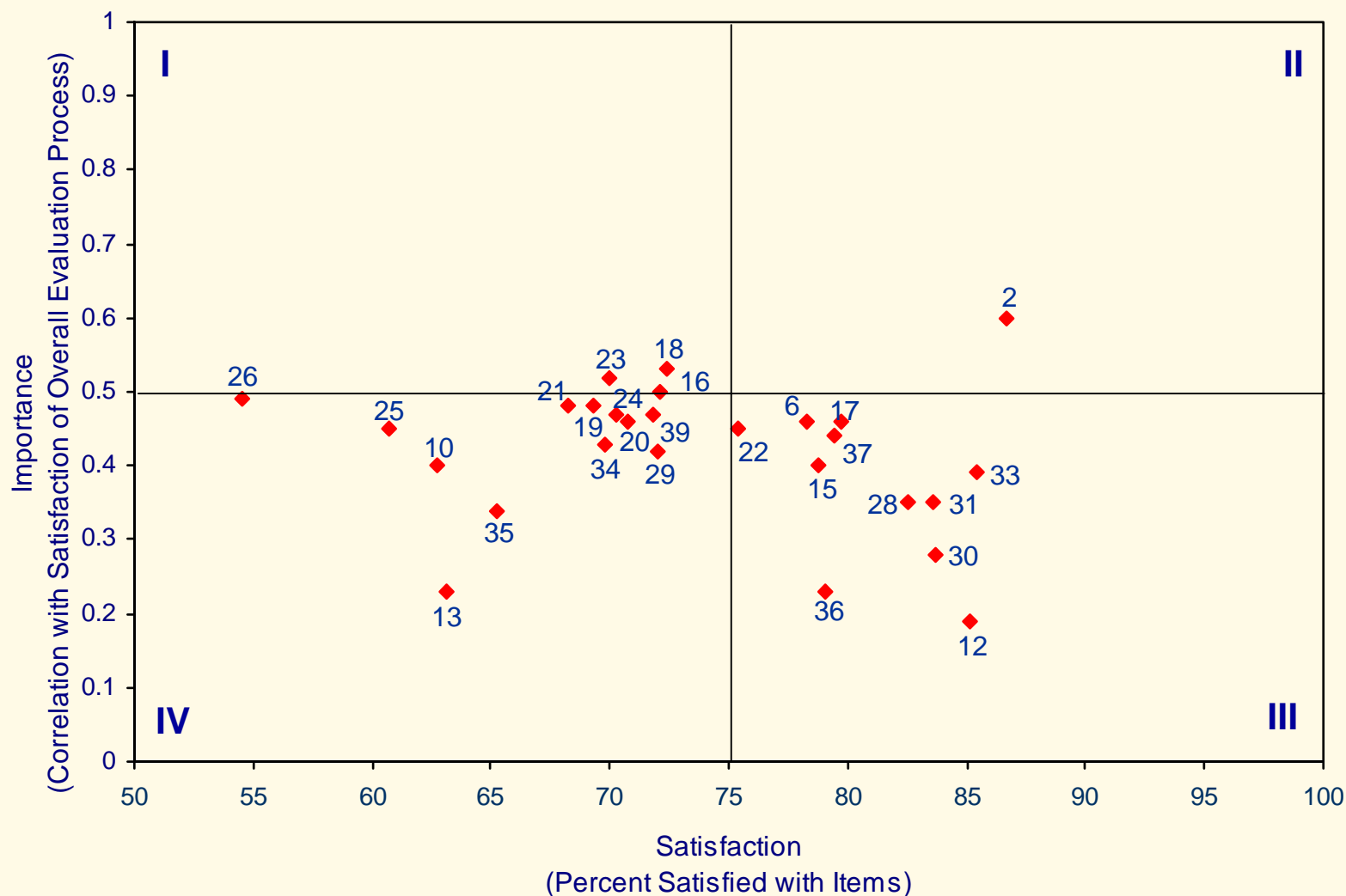
QUADRANT I: Critical Improvement Areas

- Q16 Your counselor gives you good information and advice.
- Q18 Your counselor has provided assistance according to your individual needs.
- Q23 Your counselor is responsive to your needs.

QUADRANT II: Maintain Relationship Building Variables

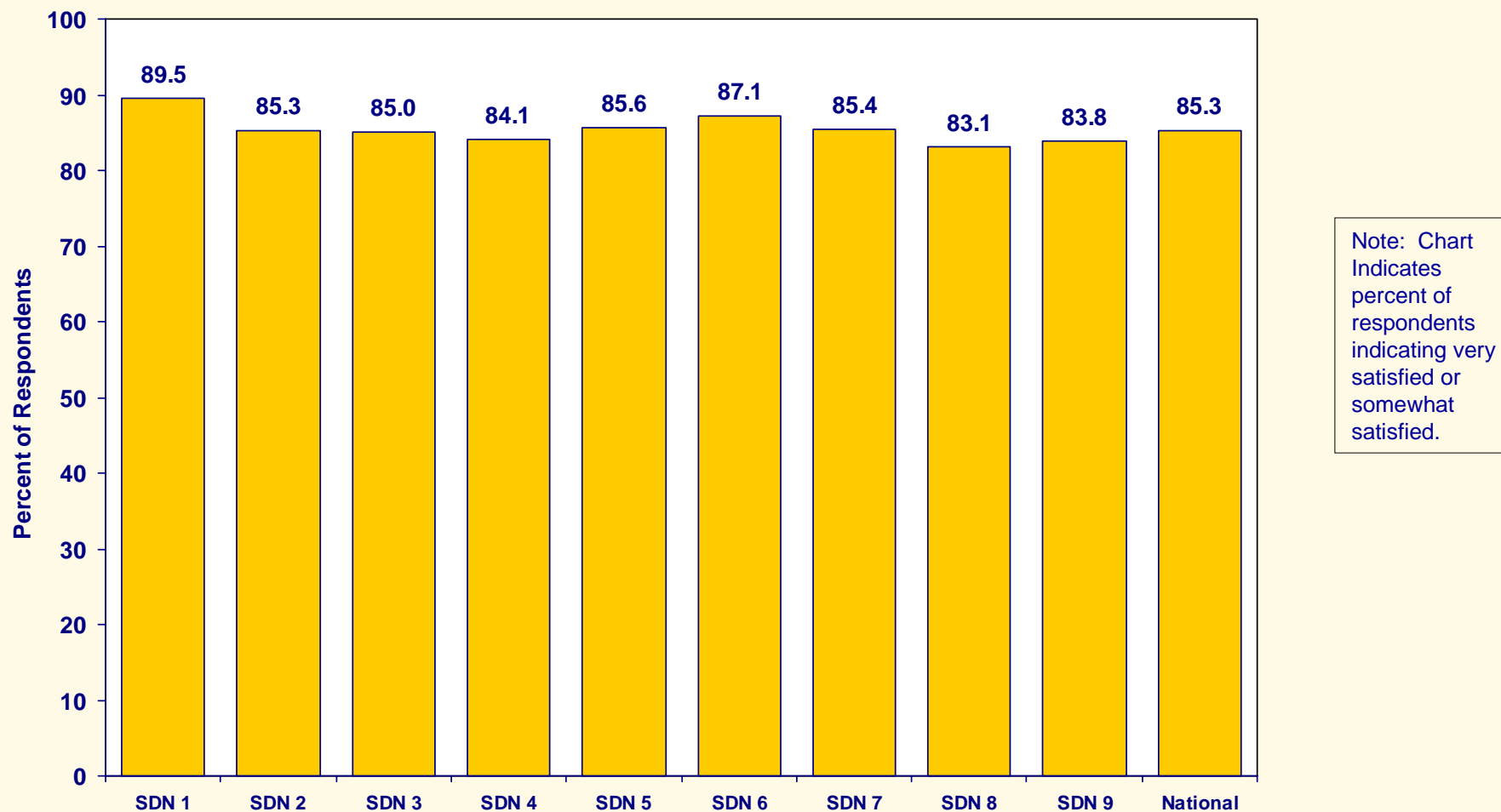
- Q2 How satisfied are you with the rehabilitation goal you and your counselor selected?

QUADRANT ANALYSIS



Question 53 by Service Delivery Network (SDN):

Satisfaction with the TRAINING OR EDUCATION phase of the plan for each regional office.



Appendix B: Methodology

Mailing Protocol

- The survey mailing protocol consisted of five mailings to veterans randomly selected into the survey sample. These five mailings included: 1) a prenotification letter informing selected participants that they should expect to receive a mailed survey questionnaire; 2) the questionnaire, including a cover letter and standard return envelope; 3) a reminder/thank-you postcard; 4) a second questionnaire mailed to those who had not yet responded, along with a cover letter and standard return envelope; 5) a second reminder/thank-you postcard. Examples of these materials appear in Appendix B.
- All mailing materials were sent bearing the VBA seal, and the cover and prenotification letters included a signature from Joseph Thompson, VBA Under Secretary for Benefits. Each questionnaire mailout contained the cover letter on VBA letterhead, a questionnaire, and a pre-posted envelope. Toll-free numbers for both Caliber Associates and VBA were included on the cover letters to assist respondents with questions regarding the survey.
- The mailings took place on the dates indicated in the table below.

Mail Survey Schedule	
Prenotification Letter	October 17, 2000
First Questionnaire	October 24, 2000
First Reminder Postcard	October 31, 2000
Second Questionnaire	November 21, 2000
Second Reminder Postcard	November 28, 2000
Fieldwork Completed	December 15, 2000

Mailing Protocol (continued)

- The distribution of mail-outs overall (nationally) and by SDN is presented in the table below.

Mailouts	
Service Delivery Network	Training and Education Phase (R)
SDN #1	629
SDN #2	735
SDN #3	714
SDN #4	722
SDN #5	682
SDN #6	726
SDN #7	740
SDN #8	719
SDN #9	743
Overall: National	6,410

Response Rates

- The Training and Education survey was expected to yield approximately 3,846 completed questionnaires across the nine VBA Service Delivery Networks, resulting in a 60% response rate.
- The response rate is calculated by dividing the number of completed questionnaires by the number of eligible questionnaires. Generally, a response rate of 70 percent or more is considered excellent, 60 to 69 percent is considered very good, 50 to 59 percent is considered good, 40 to 49 percent is considered fair, and any response rate less than 40 percent is considered poor. Without further information, data derived from a survey with a response rate of less than 50 percent should be interpreted with caution.
- Eligible questionnaires are those which were returned completed, those which were not returned, or those which were returned blank or incomplete.
- Ineligible questionnaires are those which were returned undeliverable or those which were returned with an indication that the recipient was deceased or unable to complete the questionnaire.

Response Rates (continued)

- The overall (national) response rate, and response rates by SDN are presented in the table below.

Response Rates	
Service Delivery Network	Training and Education Phase (R)
SDN #1	58.1%
SDN #2	58.6%
SDN #3	62.5%
SDN #4	59.9%
SDN #5	60.1%
SDN #6	59.6%
SDN #7	56.0%
SDN #8	58.9%
SDN #9	62.4%
Overall: National	59.6%